

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325546110>

# STRESS AND TIME MANAGEMENT

Chapter · March 2017

CITATIONS

3

READS

92,599

1 author:



[Syed Muhammad Sajjad Kabir](#)

Curtin University

107 PUBLICATIONS 536 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Research project [View project](#)



Others Writings [View project](#)

## **CHAPTER - 7**

### **STRESS AND TIME MANAGEMENT**

#### **Topics Covered**

Stress Management

What Does Stress Do

How Can Stress Management Counseling Help

Coping with Stress

Stress Management Strategy (SMS)

How Can Avoid Stress

Stress Management Techniques

Proven Tips for Stress Relief

Healthy Thinking

Automatic Thoughts and Cognitive Distortions

You Are What You Think

Irrational Thoughts

Irrational Beliefs

Time Management

How to Manage Time

Tools for Time Management Counseling

Tips to Improve Time Management Skills

Life Benefits of Time Management

Stress and Time Management Myths

<b>STRESS MANAGEMENT</b>
--------------------------

Stress is a natural part of the human experience. In fact, stress can provide motivation and increase our performance. Psychological stress is known to suppress the immune system, making us more susceptible to illness. Stress is also associated with hypertension, heart disease, headaches, and cancer. Prolonged stress can also trigger depression, anxiety, and other psychological symptoms. It may seem that there's nothing you can do about stress. The bills won't stop coming, there will never be more hours in the day, and your career and family responsibilities will always be demanding. But you have more control than you might think. In fact, the simple realization that you're in control of your life is the foundation of stress management. Managing stress is all about taking charge - of your thoughts, emotions, schedule, and the way you deal with problems.

Stress is an internal reaction to events and circumstances that challenge us to make changes in our lives. There are both external and internal causes of stress.

External Causes	Internal Causes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting diagnosed with a serious illness</li> <li>• Moving</li> <li>• Failing a test</li> <li>• Having a baby</li> <li>• Sleeping through the alarm clock</li> <li>• Losing a job</li> <li>• Being in an automobile accident</li> <li>• Being late for class</li> <li>• Having a fight with your boyfriend/girlfriend</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical changes that occur in the body-               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Illness</li> <li>- Injury</li> <li>- Being in poor physical shape</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Worrying excessively</li> <li>• Thinking negatively</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> <li>• Setting unrealistic expectations for ourselves/others</li> </ul>

Stress is the result of our need to adapt to change. The sources of change, stressors, can come from one of four basic areas -

- ❖ Environmental Stressors - examples include noise, pollution, traffic and crowding, and the weather.
- ❖ Physiological Stressors - examples include illness, menopause, injuries, hormonal fluctuations, and inadequate sleep or nutrition.
- ❖ Cognitive Stressors/ Your Thoughts - the way you think affects how you respond. Negative self-talk, catastrophizing, and perfectionism all contribute to increased stress.

- ❖ Social Stressors - examples include financial problems, work demands, family demands, social events, job interviews, examinations, and losing a loved one.

### What Does Stress Do

When we are stressed, our body responds in certain way called the ‘Stress Response’. The stress response includes the following bodily reactions -

- Muscle tension
- Increase in heart rate
- Sweating
- Rapid and shallow breathing
- Increase in blood pressure
- Cold and/or clammy hands and feet
- Queasy stomach
- Feeling fidgety.

When we experience a number of internal and/or external stressors over a period of time (i.e., weeks, months, years), there is a negative impact on us physically, psychologically, and emotionally. As a result, people frequently turn to ineffective and, usually, self-destructive behaviors to try to cope. Some symptoms only impact the person who is directly experiencing stress, while other symptoms may have an impact on our relationships with others. Fortunately, there are numerous healthy strategies and techniques available to cope with stress effectively.

### Symptoms of Stress

Emotional -	Psychological -	Behavioral -	Physical -
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Nervousness</li> <li>• Tiredness</li> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Frustration</li> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• Impatience</li> <li>• Unhappiness</li> <li>• Crying</li> <li>• Worry</li> <li>• Depression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease in concentration</li> <li>• Loss of sense of humor</li> <li>• Low self esteem</li> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Forgetfulness</li> <li>• Unwanted or repetitive thoughts</li> <li>• Lack of motivation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mood swings</li> <li>• Blaming/ defensiveness</li> <li>• Nervous habits (nail biting, finger or foot tapping)</li> <li>• Change in appetite</li> <li>• Aggressive or subdued behavior</li> <li>• Increase in alcohol consumption</li> <li>• Increase in smoking</li> <li>• Loss of libido</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Headaches</li> <li>• Backaches</li> <li>• Muscle tension (common in neck and shoulders)</li> <li>• Heart palpitations</li> <li>• High blood pressure</li> <li>• Indigestion</li> <li>• Ulcers</li> <li>• Difficulty sleeping</li> <li>• Low immunity to colds etc.</li> </ul>

Exposure to stress over prolonged periods can lead to a number of health problems. It is important to become aware of when we are feeling stressed, to recognize the symptoms and then learn to recognize the ‘triggers’ of our stress. Increasing our awareness of our symptoms and triggers enables us to develop the skills to deal with stress in our lives and implement changes that will enable us to move through stressful situations with a sense of calmness and control.

Stress is what you feel when you have to handle more than you are used to. When you are stressed, your body responds as though you are in danger. It makes hormones that speed up your heart, make you breathe faster, and give you a burst of energy. This is called the fight-or-flight stress response. Some stress is normal and even useful. Stress can help if you need to work hard or react quickly. For example, it can help you win a race or finish an important job on time. But if stress happens too often or lasts too long, it can have bad effects. It can be linked to headaches, an upset stomach, back pain, and trouble sleeping. It can weaken your immune system, making it harder to fight off disease. If you already have a health problem, stress may make it worse. It can make you moody, tense, or depressed. Your relationships may suffer, and you may not do well at work or school.

#### **How Can Stress Management Counseling Help**

- ❖ It gives you the opportunity to explore the underlying causes of your stress and anxiety.
- ❖ It helps examines your thoughts, feelings and behaviors that contribute to stress.
- ❖ You can gain self-understanding and insight, including identifying stress triggers.
- ❖ It offers tailor-made coping strategies to manage stressful situations.
- ❖ It improves your ability to handle pressures and your reactions to them.
- ❖ You can learn techniques and tools that are effective for you for the long-run.

#### ***What Can You Do About Stress?***

The good news is that you can learn ways to manage stress. To get stress under control -

- Find out what is causing stress in your life.
- Look for ways to reduce the amount of stress in your life.
- Learn healthy ways to relieve stress or reduce its harmful effects.

#### ***How Do You Measure Your Stress Level?***

Sometimes it is clear where stress is coming from. You can count on stress during a major life change such as the death of a loved one, getting married, or having a baby. But other times it may not be so clear why you feel stressed. It's important to figure

out what causes stress for you. Everyone feels and responds to stress differently. Keeping a stress journal may help. Get a notebook, and write down when something makes you feel stressed. Then write how you reacted and what you did to deal with the stress. Keeping a stress journal can help you find out what is causing your stress and how much stress you feel. Then you can take steps to reduce the stress or handle it better.

### Coping with Stress

#### Unhealthy Ways of Coping with Stress

These coping strategies may temporarily reduce stress, but they cause more damage in the long run -

- Smoking
- Consuming too much alcohol
- Over-eating or under-eating
- Zoning out for hours in front of the TV or computer
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities
- Acting out behavior (including physical aggression)
- Excessive worrying
- Using pills or drugs to relax
- Sleeping too much
- Procrastinating
- Filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems
- Taking out your stress on others (lashing out, angry outbursts, physical violence)
- Quitting jobs, relationships, etc.
- Denying that a problem exists.

#### Learning Healthier Ways to Manage Stress

If your methods of coping with stress aren't contributing to your greater emotional and physical health, it's time to find healthier ones. There are many healthy ways to manage and cope with stress, but they all require change. You can either change the situation or change your reaction. When deciding which option to choose, it's helpful to think of the four As - avoid, alter, adapt, or accept. Since everyone has a unique response to stress, there is no 'one size fits all' solution to managing it. No single method works for everyone or in every situation, so experiment with different techniques and strategies. Focus on what makes you feel calm and in control.

#### Dealing with Stressful Situations: The Four A's

Change the situation	Change your reaction
❖ Avoid the stressor.	❖ Adapt to the stressor.
❖ Alter the stressor.	❖ Accept the stressor.

<b>Stress Management Strategy (SMS)</b>
---

**SMS # 1** *Avoid Unnecessary Stress:* Not all stress can be avoided, and it's not healthy to avoid a situation that needs to be addressed. You may be surprised, however, by the number of stressors in your life that you can eliminate.

- ❖ Learn how to say 'no' - Know your limits and stick to them. Whether in your personal or professional life, refuse to accept added responsibilities when you're close to reaching them. Taking on more than you can handle is a surefire recipe for stress.
- ❖ Avoid people who stress you out - If someone consistently causes stress in your life and you can't turn the relationship around, limit the amount of time you spend with that person or end the relationship entirely.
- ❖ Take control of your environment - If the evening news makes you anxious, turn the TV off. If traffic's got you tense, take a longer but less-traveled route. If going to the market is an unpleasant chore, do your grocery shopping online.
- ❖ Avoid hot-button topics - If you get upset over religion or politics, cross them off your conversation list. If you repeatedly argue about the same subject with the same people, stop bringing it up or excuse yourself when it's the topic of discussion.
- ❖ Pare down your to-do list - Analyze your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. If you've got too much on your plate, distinguish between the 'shoulds' and the 'musts'. Drop tasks that aren't truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.

**SMS # 2** *Alter the Situation:* If you can't avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it. Figure out what you can do to change things so the problem doesn't present itself in the future. Often, this involves changing the way you communicate and operate in your daily life.

- ❖ Express your feelings instead of bottling them up. If something or someone is bothering you, communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way. If you don't voice your feelings, resentment will build and the situation will likely remain the same.
- ❖ Be willing to compromise. When you ask someone to change their behavior, be willing to do the same. If you both are willing to bend at least a little, you'll have a good chance of finding a happy middle ground.
- ❖ Be more assertive. Don't take a backseat in your own life. Deal with problems head on, doing your best to anticipate and prevent them. If you've got an exam to

study for and your chatty roommate just got home, say up front that you only have five minutes to talk.

- ❖ Manage your time better. Poor time management can cause a lot of stress. When you're stretched too thin and running behind, it's hard to stay calm and focused. But if you plan ahead and make sure you don't overextend yourself, you can alter the amount of stress you're under.

**SMS # 3 *Adapt to the Stressor:*** If you can't change the stressor, change yourself. You can adapt to stressful situations and regain your sense of control by changing your expectations and attitude.

- ❖ Reframe problems. Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. Rather than fuming about a traffic jam, look at it as an opportunity to pause and regroup, listen to your favorite radio station, or enjoy some alone time.
- ❖ Look at the big picture. Take perspective of the stressful situation. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it really worth getting upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere.
- ❖ Adjust your standards. Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others, and learn to be okay with 'good enough'.
- ❖ Focus on the positive. When stress is getting you down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life, including your own positive qualities and gifts. This simple strategy can help you keep things in perspective.
- ❖ Adjusting your attitude. How you think can have a profound effect on your emotional and physical well-being. Each time you think a negative thought about yourself, your body reacts as if it were in the throes of a tension-filled situation. If you see good things about yourself, you are more likely to feel good; the reverse is also true. Eliminate words such as 'always', 'never', 'should', and 'must'. These are telltale marks of self-defeating thoughts.

**SMS # 4 *Accept the Things You Can't Change:*** Some sources of stress are unavoidable. You can't prevent or change stressors such as the death of a loved one, a serious illness, or a national recession. In such cases, the best way to cope with stress is to accept things as they are. Acceptance may be difficult, but in the long run, it's easier than railing against a situation you can't change.

- ❖ Don't try to control the uncontrollable. Many things in life are beyond our control - particularly the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing out over them,



focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.

- ❖ Look for the upside. As the saying goes, “What doesn’t kill us makes us stronger”. 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.
- ❖ Share your feelings. Talk to a trusted friend or make an appointment with a therapist. Expressing what you’re going through can be very cathartic, even if there’s nothing you can do to alter the stressful situation.
- ❖ Learn to forgive. Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentments. Free yourself from negative energy by forgiving and moving on.

**SMS # 5 *Make Time for Fun and Relaxation:*** Beyond a take-charge approach and a positive attitude, you can reduce stress in your life by nurturing yourself. If you regularly make time for fun and relaxation, you’ll be in a better place to handle life’s stressors when they inevitably come. Don’t get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of life that you forget to take care of your own needs. Nurturing yourself is a necessity, not a luxury.

**Healthy ways to relax and recharge -**

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| • Go for a walk.                         | • Savor a warm cup of coffee or tea. |
| • Spend time in nature.                  | • Play with a pet.                   |
| • Call a good friend.                    | • Work in your garden.               |
| • Sweat out tension with a good workout. | • Get a massage.                     |
| • Write in your journal.                 | • Curl up with a good book.          |
| • Take a long bath.                      | • Listen to music.                   |
| • Light scented candles.                 | • Watch a comedy.                    |

- ❖ Set aside relaxation time. Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don’t allow other obligations to encroach. This is your time to take a break from all responsibilities and recharge your batteries.
- ❖ Connect with others. Spend time with positive people who enhance your life. A strong support system will buffer you from the negative effects of stress.
- ❖ Do something you enjoy every day. Make time for leisure activities that bring you joy, whether it be stargazing, playing the piano, or working on your bike.
- ❖ Keep your sense of humor. This includes the ability to laugh at yourself. The act of laughing helps your body fight stress in a number of ways.

**SMS # 6 *Adopt a Healthy Lifestyle:*** You can increase your resistance to stress by strengthening your physical health.

- ❖ Exercise regularly. Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress. Make time for at least 30 minutes of exercise, three times per week. Nothing beats aerobic exercise for releasing pent-up stress and tension.
- ❖ Eat a healthy diet. Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat. Start your day right with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day.
- ❖ Reduce caffeine and sugar. The temporary ‘highs’ caffeine and sugar provide often end in with a crash in mood and energy. By reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and sugar snacks in your diet, you’ll feel more relaxed and you’ll sleep better.
- ❖ Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs. Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. Don’t avoid or mask the issue at hand; deal with problems head on and with a clear mind.
- ❖ Get enough sleep. Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

Because each person is unique, some of these stress management strategies will be more helpful for you than others, and some will be new skills that require practice to be effective. Think about learning to ride a bicycle. There was a time when this was a new skill and felt very unnatural and awkward. You probably needed help at first. With some coaching and practice, stress management, like cycling or any other skill, becomes easier and more effective.

#### **How Can Avoid Stress**

Stress is a fact of life for most people. You may not be able to get rid of stress, but you can look for ways to lower it. You might try some of these ideas -

- Learn better ways to manage your time. You may get more done with less stress if you make a schedule. Think about which things are most important, and do those first.
- Find better ways to cope. Look at how you have been dealing with stress. Be honest about what works and what does not. Think about other things that might work better.
- Take good care of yourself. Get plenty of rest. Eat well. Don’t smoke. Limit how much alcohol you drink.
- Try out new ways of thinking. When you find yourself starting to worry, try to stop the thoughts. Work on letting go of things you cannot change. Learn to say “No”.

- Speak up. Not being able to talk about your needs and concerns creates stress and can make negative feelings worse. Assertive communication can help you express how you feel in a thoughtful, tactful way.
- Ask for help. People who have a strong network of family and friends manage stress better.
- Sometimes stress is just too much to handle alone. Talking to a friend or family member may help, but you may also want to see a counselor.

#### How Can You Relieve Stress?

You will feel better if you can find ways to get stress out of your system. The best ways to relieve stress are different for each person. Try some of these ideas to see which ones work for you -

- ❖ Exercise. Regular exercise is one of the best ways to manage stress. Walking is a great way to get started.
- ❖ Write. It can help to write about the things that are bothering you.
- ❖ Let your feelings out. Talk, laugh, cry, and express anger when you need to with someone you trust.
- ❖ Do something you enjoy. A hobby can help you relax. Volunteer work or work that helps others can be a great stress reliever.
- ❖ Learn ways to relax your body. This can include breathing exercises, muscle relaxation exercises, massage, aromatherapy, yoga, or relaxing exercises.
- ❖ Focus on the present. Try meditation, imagery exercises, or self-hypnosis. Listen to relaxing music. Try to look for the humor in life. Laughter really can be the best medicine.

<b>Stress Management Techniques</b>
-------------------------------------

- ❖ Organize Yourself. Take better control of the way you're spending your time and energy so you can handle stress more effectively.
- ❖ Control Your Environment by controlling who and what is surrounding you. In this way, you can either get rid of stress or get support for yourself.
- ❖ Love Yourself by giving yourself positive feedback. Remember, you are a unique individual who is doing the best you can.
- ❖ Reward Yourself by planning leisure activities into your life. It really helps to have something to look forward to.
- ❖ Exercise Your Body since your health and productivity depend upon your body's ability to bring oxygen and food to its cells. Therefore, exercise your heart and

lungs regularly, a minimum of three days per week for 15-30 minutes. This includes such activities as walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, aerobics, etc.

- ❖ Relax Yourself by taking your mind off your stress and concentrating on breathing and positive thoughts. Dreaming counts, along with meditation, progressive relaxation, exercise, listening to relaxing music, communicating with friends and loved ones, etc.
- ❖ Rest Yourself as regularly as possible. Sleep 6-7 hours a night. Take study breaks. There is only so much your mind can absorb at one time. It needs time to process and integrate information. A general rule of thumb - take a ten minute break every hour. Rest your eyes as well as your mind.
- ❖ Be Aware of Yourself. Be aware of distress signals such as insomnia, headaches, anxiety, upset stomach, lack of concentration, colds/flu, excessive tiredness, etc. Remember, these can be signs of potentially more serious disorders (i.e., ulcers, hypertension, heart disease).
- ❖ Feed Yourself/ Do Not Poison Your Body. Eat a balanced diet. Avoid high calorie foods that are high in fats and sugar. Don't depend on drugs and/or alcohol. Caffeine will keep you awake, but it also makes it harder for some to concentrate. Remember, a twenty minute walk has been proven to be a better tranquilizer than some prescription drugs.
- ❖ Enjoy Yourself. It has been shown that happier people tend to live longer, have less physical problems, and are more productive. Look for the humor in life when things don't make sense. Remember, you are very special and deserve only the best treatment from yourself.

<b>Proven Tips for Stress Relief</b>
--------------------------------------

1. Have an optimistic view of the world. Believe that most people are doing the best they can.
2. Get up fifteen minutes earlier in the morning. The inevitable morning mishaps will be less stressful.
3. Prepare for the morning the evening before. Set the breakfast table, make lunches, put out the clothes you plan to wear, etc.
4. Don't rely on your memory. Write down appointment times, when to pick up the laundry, when library books are due, etc.
5. Do nothing which, after being done, leads you to tell a lie.
6. Make duplicates of all keys. Bury a house key in a secret spot in the garden and carry a duplicate car key in your wallet, apart from your key ring.

7. Practice preventive maintenance. Your car, appliances, home, and relationships will be less likely to break down/fall apart 'at the worst possible moment'.
8. Be prepared to wait. A paperback can make a wait in a post office line almost pleasant.
9. Procrastination is stressful. Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do today; whatever you want to do today, do it now.
10. Plan ahead. Don't let the gas tank get below one-quarter full; keep a well-stocked 'emergency shelf' of home staples; don't wait until you're down to your last bus token or postage stamp to buy more; etc.
11. Don't put up with something that doesn't work right. If your alarm clock, wallet, shoe laces, windshield wipers - whatever - are a constant aggravation, get them fixed or get new ones.
12. Allow 15 minutes of extra time to get to appointments. Plan to arrive at an airport one hour before domestic departures.
13. Eliminate (or restrict) the amount of caffeine in your diet.
14. Always set up contingency plans, 'just in case'. ("If for some reason either of us is delayed, here's what we'll do. . ." kind of thing. Or, "If we get split up in the shopping center, here's where we'll meet".)
15. Relax your standards. The world will not end if the grass doesn't get mowed this weekend.
16. Pollyanna-Power. For every one thing that goes wrong, there are probably 10 or 50 or 100 blessings.
17. Ask questions. Taking a few moments to repeat back directions, what someone expects of you, etc., can save hours. (The old 'the hurrieder I go, the behinder I get', idea.)
18. Say 'No'. Saying 'no' to extra projects, social activities, and invitations you know you don't have the time or energy for takes practice, self-respect, and a belief that everyone, everyday, needs quiet time to relax and be alone.
19. Unplug your phone. Want to take a long bath, meditate, sleep, or read without interruption. Drum up the courage to temporarily disconnect. Or use an answering machine.
20. Turn 'needs' into preferences. Our basic physical needs translate into food, water, and keeping warm. Everything else is a preference. Don't get attached to preferences.
21. Simplify, simplify, simplify...
22. Make friends with non-worriers. Nothing can get you into the habit of worrying faster than associating with chronic worrywarts.

23. Get up and stretch periodically if your job requires that you sit for extended periods.
24. Wear earplugs. If you need to find quiet at home, pop in some earplugs.
25. Get enough sleep. If necessary, use an alarm clock to remind you to go to bed.
26. Create order out of chaos. Organize your home and workspace so that you always know exactly where things are. Put things away where they belong and you won't have to go through the stress of losing things.
27. When feeling stressed, most people tend to breathe short, shallow breaths. When you breathe like this, stale air is not expelled, oxidation of the tissues is incomplete, and muscle tension frequently results. Check your breathing throughout the day, and before, during, and after high-pressure situations. If you find your stomach muscles knotted and your breathing is shallow, relax all your muscles and take several deep, slow breaths.
28. Writing your thoughts and feelings down (in a journal, or on paper to be thrown away) can help you clarify things and can give you a renewed perspective.
29. Try the following yoga technique whenever you feel the need to relax. Inhale deeply through your nose to the count of eight. Then, with lips puckered, exhale very slowly through your mouth to the count of 16, or for as long as you can. Concentrate on the long sighing sound and feel the tension dissolve. Repeat 10 times.
30. Inoculate yourself against a feared event. Example - before speaking in public, take time to go over every part of the experience in your mind. Imagine what you'll wear, what the audience will look like, how you will present your talk, what the questions will be and how you will answer them, etc. Visualize the experience the way you would have it be. You'll likely find that when the time comes to make the actual presentation, it will be 'old hat' and much of your anxiety will have fled.
31. When the stress of having to get a job done gets in the way of getting the job done, diversion - a voluntary change in activity and/or environment - may be just what you need.
32. Talk it out. Discussing your problems with a trusted friend can help clear your mind of confusion so you can concentrate on problem solving.
33. One of the most obvious ways to avoid unnecessary stress is to select an environment (work, home, leisure) which is in line with your personal needs and desires. If you hate desk jobs, don't accept a job which requires that you sit at a desk all day. If you hate to talk politics, don't associate with people who love to talk politics, etc.

34. Learn to live one day at a time.
35. Every day, do something you really enjoy.
36. Add an ounce of love to everything you do.
37. Take a hot bath or shower (or a cool one in summertime) to relieve tension.
38. Do something for somebody else.
39. Focus on understanding rather than on being understood; on loving rather than on being loved.
40. Do something that will improve your appearance. Looking better can help you feel better.
41. Schedule a realistic day. Avoid the tendency to schedule back-to-back appointments; allow time between appointments for a breathing spell.
42. Become more flexible. Some things are worth not doing perfectly and some issues are fine to compromise upon.
43. Eliminate destructive self-talk - "I'm too old to. . .", "I'm too fat to. . .", etc.
44. Use your weekend time for a change of pace. If your work week is slow and patterned, make sure there is action and time for spontaneity built into your weekends. If your work week is fast-paced and full of people and deadlines, seek peace and solitude during your days off. Feel as if you aren't accomplishing anything at work? Tackle a job on the weekend which you can finish to your satisfaction.
45. Take care of the todays as best you can and the yesterdays and the tomorrows will take care of themselves.
46. Do one thing at a time. When you are with someone, be with that person and with no one or nothing else. When you are busy with a project, concentrate on doing that project and forget about everything else you have to do.
47. Allow yourself time - everyday - for privacy, quiet, and introspection.
48. If an especially unpleasant task faces you, do it early in the day and get it over with, then the rest of your day will be free of anxiety.
49. Learn to delegate responsibility to capable others.
50. Don't forget to take a lunch break. Try to get away from your desk or work area in body and mind, even if it's just for 15 or 20 minutes.
51. Forget about counting to 10. Count to 1,000 before doing something or saying anything that could make matters worse.
52. Have a forgiving view of events and people. Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world.

**HEALTHY THINKING**

For more information on challenging your thoughts, see -

1. Learning about Automatic Thoughts and Cognitive Distortions
2. You Are What You Think
3. Common Irrational Thoughts
4. Handling Irrational Beliefs.

**Automatic Thoughts and Cognitive Distortions**

Automatic thoughts are just what the name implies. They are the thoughts that occur constantly as our minds seek to narrate what is going on around us. The limbic system is the area of the brain that controls our immediate response to situations, and this is where our automatic thoughts are born. It assesses what is going on quickly and makes a snap judgment based on the information at hand. In other situations, though, it would be better for us to slow down and wait for more information and not react to situations based on our limbic system's messages alone. If left unchecked, automatic thoughts may lead to emotional wellness concerns like anxiety, depression, stress and sleep difficulty. Everything we think is an automatic thought. A problem arises when our automatic thoughts manifest as cognitive distortions. Cognitive distortions are automatic thoughts that are based on deeply ingrained core beliefs, and they are irrational reactions we habitually have to situations. We often don't even know that we see the world in terms of these cognitive distortions. Just as the name implies, they are based on faulty reasoning. There are several types of common cognitive distortions.

**Overgeneralization:** As we go through life, we learn from our experiences. It is a natural process of trial and error. Problems arise when we lump all similar experiences together and decide that all experiences of a certain nature will always turn out the same way. See the uses of the words 'all' and 'always' in that last sentence. That's a hint at overgeneralization.

If Jane got dumped by her first boyfriend and decided from then on that she is destined to always get dumped, she'd be making an overgeneralization. This thinking doesn't take into account the different factors that affect every situation, though. Instead of assessing why she got dumped by her first boyfriend and learning from the actual experience as it happened, she simply decided to learn a general lesson about the nature of relationships. This can obviously lead to trouble. As she goes through relationships later in life operating under this assumption, she'll be much more likely to act in ways that will fulfill her fears. She won't be able to open up and communicate in her relationships because she won't be comfortable. This will lead to more experiences of getting dumped, and if she continues to overgeneralize, this will just reinforce the assumption. It will also prevent her from learning about the subtle intricacies of her experiences.



**Labeling:** Labeling is similar to overgeneralization. It can take the form of making sweeping overgeneralizations about a group of people based on the actions of only a few of them. It can also manifest as self-labeling. Self-labeling can have extremely negative effects.

If a person gets a bad grade on a math test and automatically says, “I’m a bad math student”, they won’t take the steps necessary to improve their math skills. “Bad math student” is a label that they’ve applied to themselves, and it most likely is not true. With further study, this person would be able to figure out what they did wrong and how to do it right. Instead, by labeling themselves as a “bad math student”, they don’t have to take responsibility for doing the work to learn about math. These labels are self-defeating, and they often lead us to create the very situation that is causing us problems.

**Mind Reading:** Often we assume that we know what people are thinking about us, even if their actions are neutral or indicate the contrary. This is referred to as mind reading.

Everybody knows that we can’t really read minds. If we’re having a conversation with somebody and they correct us about something, we are likely to automatically think, “Oh, no, they think I’m an idiot!” This is probably not true; we are much more critical of ourselves than others are of us. In fact, they probably didn’t even think anything at all about our mistake. Yet we will let what we assume they think about us affect our behavior for the rest of our conversation with that person, and this might make for some negative outcomes if we hadn’t assumed that they thought the worst of us.

**Fortune Telling:** When we assume that we know what will happen in the future, we’re fortune telling.

Hasan is looking for a job. Every time he sits down to send out resumes, he thinks, “There’s no way I’m even going to get considered for these jobs”. He sends out the resumes anyway, but never follows up with a phone call or tries to set up any interviews. Because he’s automatically assumed that he won’t get the jobs, he doesn’t try very hard to stand out from the other applicants. He’s convinced they’re better than him. His fortune telling in this situation prevents him from putting forth any effort. Not surprisingly, he doesn’t get the jobs, but it’s because his negative fortune telling is controlling his behavior. Often we try to predict the future in situations without any evidence to support our claim, and sometimes we even try to predict an outcome when there’s evidence to the contrary. Negative fortune telling without proper objective evidence sets us up for failure because we’ll be much less likely to give the situation the chance it deserves.

**Emotional Reasoning:** As we’ve seen, sometimes our automatic thoughts are based on irrational assumptions. If we stop and think about them rationally, breaking them down based on solid evidence, then we see them as irrational and replace them with new, more rational viewpoints. If we analyze them with emotional reasoning, though, we feed into them and come to faulty conclusions. Basically, emotional reasoning is basing our thoughts and beliefs on our feelings.

If you're getting ready to give a speech in a meeting and you're nervous, you might think, "I must not be very well prepared. Otherwise I wouldn't be so nervous. I'm going to make a fool out of myself!" Even though you spent several hours the day before preparing materials and information for this presentation, you're discounting this fact because you're nervous about speaking in front of your boss and co-workers. Nervousness is a normal emotional reaction to the situation, but it doesn't mean that you don't know the material. This reasoning doesn't work because the only evidence used is the way you feel in a certain situation, and it doesn't take into account all the other factors operating at the time.

**Shoulding:** 'Shoulding yourself' is criticizing yourself by concentrating on all the things you should be doing instead of whatever you're doing at the time.

If you're watching a movie and all you can think is, "I should be studying", you diminish any possible enjoyment you could be getting out of watching the movie. You also make it much less likely that you'll actually do all those things you "should" be doing. By simply saying, "I should be studying", you make it into a chore completely devoid of any benefit, and you won't want to do it. If instead you think, "If I study now, I will have more time tomorrow to hang out with my friends, and I'd rather hang out with them tomorrow than watch this movie right now", then you're weighing your options and making a decision to study that will yield a positive result. Sure, everyone has obligations in situations that they have to take care of, and these obligations aren't always exactly what we'd like to be doing at the moment. By weighing the costs and benefits rather than simply imposing "shoulds" on every obligation, we can make the most of our time and get more enjoyment out of life. Some shoulds are even more harmful. While "I should be studying", will most likely just lead to procrastination, "I should be reading a classic novel by Dickens rather than this scientific fantasy fiction because I need to get smarter", is worse because it's based on the idea that we should spend even our free time doing what other people expect of us (or, in many cases, what we think they expect of us) rather than what we enjoy or think is right. A great example is people who go to college because they think that they "should". If, after weighing all the options, someone decides that college isn't the best option for them, they don't have to go, even if they think that others will judge them for that choice. "Shoulding" ourselves can lead to making major life decisions that aren't necessarily the actual best choices.

**Personalization/ Blame:** Personalization is when we take the blame for outcomes that are beyond our control. Blame is when we point the finger at somebody else for an outcome something that we caused. Personalization and blame are both based on the assumption that people should be perfect and never make mistakes, and when mistakes are made, someone must be at fault and made to pay. The problem here is that everybody makes mistakes, and mistakes are simply an opportunity for us to learn to be better and grow. Punishment isn't necessary for everyday errors; the idea is to see where we went wrong and try to do better in the future. It also means learning to distinguish between things we did wrong, factors we couldn't control (such as other people's reactions, opinions, and ideas), and things that were caused by other's actions.

Let's say that Jane, who got dumped a few examples ago, got dumped because her boyfriend was moving away and didn't want to try to maintain a long distance relationship. If she tells herself, "I don't care what he says. I got dumped because I'm ugly and stupid", then she's blaming herself for the outcome of a situation when it actually had nothing to do with who she is. It wasn't her fault that he had to move, and it wasn't her fault that he doesn't believe in long distance relationships. Now she feels guilty for being herself (which, by the way, is not "ugly" or "stupid" - these are cognitive distortions in and of themselves).

**All or None:** All-or-nothing thinking is the same as saying, 'Everything is black or white'. Perfectionists often engage in all-or-nothing thinking. People are either all good or all bad.

An example would be if Babul overslept one morning and thought, "I don't have time to run my usual full 5 miles today, so I'm not going to run at all. I'm such a lazy bum". Even though Babul does have time to run 3 miles, he's given up because he can't see the benefit in modifying his standard. He also has decided that this automatically makes him a "bad" person. A lot of times women will engage in all-or-nothing thinking about their bodies. They think, "Either I'm thin, toned, and a perfect size 6, or I'm a fat disgusting slob in a size 10". This is a distortion; it doesn't take into account that people are different. There are variations in height, frame, and muscular structure that can influence our size. This one example of all-or-nothing thinking can lead to more harmful all-or-nothing thinking such as, "I'm already fat, so I might as well just eat that whole pint of ice cream and box of cookies", or the other extreme, "I'm so fat, I should only eat an apple at breakfast, lunch, and dinner". All-or-nothing thinking looks at things as absolutes rather than a combination of factors. It also assumes that people, places, and things can be perfect, and if they're not completely without flaws they must be horrible.

All of these cognitive distortions can have harmful effects on our feelings and behavior. By learning to recognize them, we can learn to talk ourselves out of such thinking and see things in a more positive light. They won't go away just because we realize that they're there, but we can learn how to spot them when they do arise and change our outlook by applying more rational thinking.

### **You Are What You Think**

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Which came first, the depression symptoms or the pessimistic thoughts? I can't answer the first question, but the answer to the latter may surprise you. In many cases, depression actually is the result of habitual negative thoughts. When bad things happen, we begin chastising ourselves with thoughts such as - I'm no good, I'm a total failure or nothing ever goes my way. Our feelings follow what we are thinking, and negative thoughts like these can send us spiraling down into depression. This concept is the guiding principle behind cognitive therapy, a type of psychotherapy developed by psychiatrist Aaron T. Beck in the 1960s. If we think something often enough, we begin to believe it's true and our feelings match what we are thinking about ourselves. To conquer depression, we must

stop those automatic negative thoughts and replace them with more positive, truthful ones. By nipping these thoughts in the bud, we can halt depression before it even starts.

Cognitive therapy is directed at 10 common cognitive distortions, or faulty thought patterns, that send us into depression. See if you recognize yourself in any of these.

- **All-or-Nothing Thinking:** Jony recently applied for a promotion in his firm. The job went to another employee with more experience. Jony wanted this job badly and now feels that he will never be promoted. He feels that he is a total failure in his career.
- **Overgeneralization:** Liza is lonely and often spends most of her time at home. Her friends sometimes ask her to come out for dinner and meet new people. Liza feels that it is useless to try to meet people. No one really could like her. People are all mean and superficial anyway.
- **Mental Filter:** Mouri is having a bad day. As she drives home, a kind gentleman waves her to go ahead of him as she merges into traffic. Later in her trip, another driver cuts her off. She grumbles to herself that there are nothing but rude and insensitive people in her city.
- **Disqualifying the Positive:** Ruhi just had her portrait made. Her friend tells her how beautiful she looks. Ruhi brushes aside the compliment by saying that the photographer must have touched up the picture. She never looks that good in real life, she thinks.
- **Jumping to Conclusions:** Rasel is waiting for his date at a restaurant. She's now 20 minutes late. Rasel laments to himself that he must have done something wrong and now she has stood him up. Meanwhile, across town, his date is stuck in traffic.
- ❖ **Magnification and Minimization:** Sujit is playing football. He bungles a play that he's been practicing for weeks. He later scores the winning touchdown. His teammates compliment him. He tells them he should have played better; the touchdown was just dumb luck.
- ❖ **Emotional Reasoning:** Lota looks around her untidy house and feels overwhelmed by the prospect of cleaning. She feels that it's hopeless to even try to clean.
- ❖ **Should Statements:** Raju is sitting in his doctor's waiting room. His doctor is running late. Raju sits stewing, thinking, "With how much I'm paying him, he should be on time. He ought to have more consideration". He ends up feeling bitter and resentful.
- ❖ **Labeling and Mislabeling:** Shopna just cheated on her diet. I'm a fat, lazy pig, she thinks.

- ❖ Personalization: Ruma's son is doing poorly in school. She feels that she must be a bad mother. She feels that it's all her fault that he isn't studying.

If you recognize any of these behaviors in yourself, then you're halfway there. Here's a homework assignment for you - Over the next few weeks, monitor the self-defeating ways in which you respond to situations. Practice recognizing your automatic responses. Now, we will take each of the above cognitive distortions and discuss some powerful coping strategies that will help you dispel the blues before they even start.

### **Irrational Thoughts**

Here are 10 specific thoughts that must be recognized, evaluated, challenged and changed. It is rigid and thoughtless adherence to these specific ideas that cause us problems, not life itself.

- Irrational Idea - 1: It is a dire necessity for an adult to be loved or approved by almost everyone for virtually everything s/he does.
- Irrational Idea - 2: One should be thoroughly competent, adequate, and achieving in all possible respects.
- Irrational Idea - 3: Certain people are bad, wicked, or villainous and they should be severely blamed and punished for their sins.
- Irrational Idea - 4: It is terrible, horrible, and catastrophic when things are not going the way one would like them to go.
- Irrational Idea - 5: Human happiness is externally caused and people have little or no ability to control their sorrows or rid themselves of their negative feelings.
- Irrational Idea - 6: If something is or may be dangerous or fearsome, one should be terribly occupied with it and upset about it.
- Irrational Idea - 7: It is easier to avoid facing many life difficulties and self-responsibilities than to undertake more rewarding forms of self-discipline.
- Irrational Idea - 8: The past is all-important and because something once strongly affected one's life, it should indefinitely do so.
- Irrational Idea - 9: People and things should be different from the way that they are, and it is catastrophic if perfect to the grim realities of life are not immediately found.
- Irrational Idea - 10: Maximum human happiness can be achieved by inertia and inaction or by passively 'enjoying oneself'.

The six-step change model works for both work and personal life and is direct, straightforward and results-oriented -

Step One: Gather Data - First, you need self-cooperation and commitment. Start by exploring the problem to figure out what is happening. Don't accept your diagnosis or view of the problem.

Step Two: Study the Data and Develop an Understanding of the Problem - Identify the facts (not your interpretation) - just the facts, as if you were looking at a video.

Step Three: Develop a Plan - Study the various lists of flawed thinking patterns and identify which one/s you may be using in this situation. Treating your thoughts (my boss hates me; my spouse is probably unfaithful) as if they were uttered by an external person whose mission is to make your life miserable and then marshal evidence against the thoughts. Avoid blame, use humor and self-congratulation.

Step Four: Dispute your Problem Thinking - Actively and relentlessly dispute your flawed thinking patterns.

Step Five: Replace Problem Thinking with New Thinking - Develop new thinking to replace the old. This new thinking must meet several criteria -

- ❖ It must be more accurate and true in real life than the old thinking. So not try to think things that are not true (it is not a Pollyanna approach). When you carefully examine the old, you can usually discern that the old thinking was, in fact, irrational. New replacement thoughts must pass the tests of truthfulness and accuracy, or the system won't work. Why should you impose more incorrect thinking on yourself?
- ❖ The new thinking must be reasonable and achievable. Grandiose or extremely radical new thinking isn't likely to work (unless you are a radical sort of person). People rarely change their thinking in radical ways (outside of cults). Thought changes must be relatively small and not significantly incompatible with the rest of your beliefs and attitudes. If you want to make large-scale changes in your belief system, a longer-term plan must be adopted and it should include small steps to get there.
- ❖ The new thinking must be acceptable to you. If it violates your core values or religious views, it probably won't last, even if you think it will.

Step Six: Reinforce and Sustain New Thinking - Reward and support them in your daily work and personal life. Behavior and thinking changes are usually uncomfortable at first. It may be useful at this stage to enlist the active involvement of others, especially if others are to benefit from it. The old ways of thinking are likely to be resilient and can easily bounce back before new thinking is solidly entrenched.

At its best, this approach can work wonders in a short period of time. Some people can rapidly learn to notice and label their thinking and then change it to great benefit, especially when motivated. Most people can learn this technique with relative ease and can implement significant changes that are sustainable, provided someone consistently reminds and reinforces these changes over a period of several months. Even so, humans tend to slip back into old patterns and it helps to have reinforcement available for extended periods of time. This can include simple reminders like small signs around the office, a note posted on the fridge, or a regular journal with a commitment to long-term change. If you are making work-related changes, it is useful to recruit team members and co-workers to help with the process, if this would not embarrass you.

### **ABC Change Model for Learning Optimism**

It's much easier to be optimistic if you come from a family where your parents were understanding of your failures and attributed them to external, rather than internal, factors. Families that have experienced major traumas but cope and recover from adversity also produce more optimistic offspring. Parents of optimists encourage their children to deal with setbacks in an optimistic way and differentially reinforce optimism and persistence. Optimism is also related to the ability to delay gratification and forgo short-term gains in order to achieve long-term goals, probably because optimistic people can have faith that long-term goals are achievable.

Seligman has found success in teaching a form of learned optimism to people with a pessimistic explanatory style, using the ABCDE approach. 'ABC' refers to how we react negatively to success or adversity, while 'DE' refers to how we can rethink the pessimistic reaction into an optimistic one. The letters are defined as follows -

- ❖ **A (Adversity).** Recognize when adversity hits. For die-hard pessimists, successes are a form of adversity; they say, "It won't last", "I was just lucky", or "Too little, too late".
- ❖ **B (Beliefs).** Be aware of what you believe about the adversity.
- ❖ **C (Consequences).** Be aware of the emotional and other consequences of your belief about that adversity.
- ❖ **D (Disputation).** Question whether your beliefs are the only explanation.
- ❖ **E (Energization).** Be aware of the new consequences (feelings, behaviors, actions) that do or could follow from a different, more optimistic explanation or set of beliefs.

Here is an example of the ABCDE model as applied to a specific situation. The train of thought went like this -

- I didn't finish this chapter by the end of the holiday as I promised my wife and myself I would do. (Adversity)
- I'm an incurable procrastinator who'll never meet my goals. (Beliefs - a personal, pervasive, and permanent explanation, which is therefore pessimistic)
- I might as well abandon this project and settle for a life of less ambitious projects. That way, my wife won't be disappointed with me when I miss deadlines. (Consequence)
- Wait a minute! Lots of writers set unrealistic deadlines. Besides, my wife and I did several things together and with her parents that had a very positive impact on our relationship. And if sticking to my schedule were so all-fired important to her, she could have insisted on doing some of those things without me. (Disputation)
- I'll talk about my schedule with her and get her input on whether the remainder of the schedule is important to her. If not, I'll push my deadlines back. If so, I'll ask her assistance and cooperation in finding ways to make more time for writing. I really don't want to give up this project. It's exciting, even if it is a little off-schedule. (Energization)

If you are a ruminator (someone who talks silently and continually to himself or herself in a negative vein, as in "I'm going to fail. I'm no good.."), then you need to learn more than just a more optimistic explanatory style. You need to learn how to jerk away from the hold that pessimistic thoughts have on you. Seligman suggests several distracting techniques in his book, including wearing a rubber band on your wrist (snap it when you start ruminating) and creating physical distractions (such as slapping the wall or doing isometric exercises) as ways to pop the pessimistic preoccupation out of your mind.

### **Irrational Beliefs**

Irrational beliefs are -

- Messages about life we send to ourselves that keep us from growing emotionally.
- Scripts we have in our head about how we believe life 'should' be for us and for others.
- Unfounded attitudes, opinions and values we hold to that are out of synchrony with the way the world really is.
- Negative sets of habitual responses we hold to when faced with stressful events or situations.
- Stereotypical ways of problem solving we fall into in order to deal with life's pressures.



- Ideas, feelings, beliefs, ways of thinking, attitudes, opinions, biases, prejudices or values with which we were raised. We have become accustomed to using them when faced with problems in our current life, even when they are not productive in helping us reach a positive, growth-enhancing solution.
- Self-defeating ways of acting. On the surface they may look appropriate for the occasion, but actually they result in a neutral or negative consequence for us.
- Habitual ways of thinking, feeling or acting that we think are effective; however, in the long run they are ineffectual.
- Counterproductive ways of thinking, which give comfort and security in the short run, but either do not resolve or actually exacerbate the problem in the long run.
- Negative or pessimistic ways of looking at necessary life experiences such as loss, conflict, risk taking, rejection or accepting change.
- Overly optimistic or idealistic ways of looking at necessary life experiences such as loss, conflict, risk taking, rejection or accepting change.
- Emotional arguments for taking or not taking action in the face of a challenge. When followed they result in no personal gain, but rather in greater personal hardship or loss.
- Patterns of thinking that make us appear to others as stubborn, bullheaded, intemperate, argumentative or aloof.
- Ways of thinking about ourselves that are out of context with the real facts, resulting in our either under-valuing or over-valuing ourselves.
- Means by which we become confused about the intentions of others when we are enmeshed in interpersonal problems with them.
- Lifelong messages sent to us either formally or informally by - society, culture, community, race, ethnic reference group, neighborhood, church, social networks, family, relatives, peer group, school, work or parents. They are unproductive in solving our current problem or crisis, but we are either unwilling or unable to let go of them. These messages can be very clear to us or they can be hidden in our subconscious.
- Conclusions about life that we have developed over time, living in an irrational environment not identified as being irrational (e.g., beliefs developed as a member of a high-stress family).
- Standards by which we were reared and from which we learned how to act, what to believe and how to express or experience feelings. When followed, however, these standards do not result in a satisfactory resolution of our current problems.
- Ritualistic ways by which we pursue our relationships with others, resulting in nonproductive relationships and increased emotional stress.

- Outmoded, unproductive, unrealistic expectations exacted on ourselves and/or others, guaranteed to be unattainable and to result in continuing negative self-concepts.

### **Some Examples of Irrational Beliefs**

Irrational beliefs (negative) about self-

- \* I do not deserve positive attention from others.
- \* I should never burden others with my problems or fears.
- \* I am junk.
- \* I am uncreative, nonproductive, ineffective and untalented.
- \* I am worthless.
- \* I am the worst example on earth of a person.
- \* I am powerless to solve my problems.
- \* I have so many problems; I might as well give up right now.
- \* I am so dumb about things, I can never solve anything as complex as this.
- \* I am the ugliest, most unattractive, unappealing, fat slob in the world.

Irrational beliefs (negative) about others -

- \* No one cares about anyone else.
- \* All men (or women) are dishonest and are never to be trusted.
- \* Successful relationships are a trick; you have no control over how they turn out.
- \* People are out to get whatever they can from you; you always end up being used.
- \* People are so opinionated; they are never willing to listen to other's points of view.
- \* You are bound to get hurt in a relationship; it makes no difference how you try to change it.
- \* There is a loser in every fight, so avoid fights at all costs.
- \* All people are out for number 1; you need to know you'll always be number 2, no matter what.
- \* It's not who you are but what you do that makes you attractive to another person.
- \* What counts in life are others' opinions of you.
- \* There is a need to be on guard in dealing with others to insure that you don't get hurt.

Irrational beliefs on other topics -

- \* There is only one way of doing things.
- \* Work is the punishment man must endure for being human.
- \* A family that plays (prays) together always stays together.
- \* Always protecting against the forces of evil in life is the only way to live.

- \* There are always two choices - right or wrong; black or white; win or lose; pass or fail; grow or stagnate.
- \* Once you are married and have children, you join the normal human race.
- \* A handicapped person is imperfect, to be pitied and to be dropped along the path of life.
- \* Admitting to a mistake or to failure is a sign of weakness.
- \* The showing of any kind of emotion is wrong, a sign of weakness, and not allowable.
- \* Asking for help from someone else is a way of admitting your weakness; it denies the reality that only you can solve your problems.

### **Recognize Irrational Beliefs**

Irrational beliefs can be present if we -

- Find ourselves caught up in a vicious cycle in addressing our problems.
- Find a continuing series of 'catch 22s' where every move we make to resolve a problem results in more or greater problems.
- Have been suffering silently (or not so silently) with a problem for a long time, yet have not taken steps to get help to address the problem.
- Have decided on a creative problem solving solution, yet find ourselves incapable of implementing the solution.
- Have chosen a problem solving course of action to pursue and find that we are unhappy with this course of action; yet we choose to avoid looking for alternatives.
- Are afraid of pursuing a certain course of action because of the guilt we will feel if we do it.
- Find we are constantly obsessed with a problem yet take no steps to resolve it.
- Find we are immobilized in the face of our problems.
- Find that the only way to deal with problems is to avoid them, deny them, procrastinate about them, ignore them, run away from them, turn our back on them.
- Find that we can argue both sides of our problem, becoming unable to make a decision.

### **Benefits of Refuting Irrational Beliefs**

By refuting our irrational beliefs, we are able to -

- ✓ Unblock our emotions and feelings about ourselves and our problems.
- ✓ Become productive, realistic problem solvers.
- ✓ Gain greater credibility with ourselves and others.

- ✓ Gain clarity, purpose and intention in addressing our current problems.
- ✓ Reduce the fear of guilt or of hurting others in solving problems.
- ✓ Identify the barriers and obstacles that must first be hurdled before our problems can be resolved.
- ✓ Come to greater honesty about ourselves and our problems.
- ✓ Put our problem into a realistic perspective as to its importance, magnitude and probability of being solved.
- ✓ Separate our feelings from the content of the problem.
- ✓ Live richer, more authentic lives.
- ✓ View our lives in a healthier perspective, with greater meaning and direction.
- ✓ Gain our sense of humor in the presence of our problems and in their resolution.
- ✓ Recognize our self-worth and self-goodness and separate it from the errors and mistakes we have made in our lives.
- ✓ Forgive ourselves and others for mistakes made.
- ✓ Give ourselves and others kindness, tenderness and understanding during times of great stress.
- ✓ Gain a sense of purpose and order in our lives as we solve problems.
- ✓ Feel productive as we labor through the muck and mire of our problems.
- ✓ Respect our rights and the rights of others as we solve problems.
- ✓ Clarify our feelings about the behavior of others without the barrier of self-censorship or fear of rejection.
- ✓ Gain a 'win-win' solution to problems, which involves ourselves with others. It opens us up to compromise.

### **Steps to Take in Refuting an Irrational Belief**

Step 1: Is your thinking and problem solving ability being blocked by an irrational belief?

- Consider a specific problem as you answer the following questions - Am I going in circles in trying to solve this problem?
- Is there something inside of me that is preventing or keeping me from taking the necessary actions in this matter?
- Am I bothered by the thoughts of what I or others should do, act like, think or feel in this situation?
- Do I find myself saying how this situation 'should be', having a hard time facing it the way it really is?
- Do I use fantasy or magical thinking in looking at this problem? Am I always hoping that by some miracle it will go away?
- Am I burdened by the fear of what others think of me as I work on this problem?

- Do I know what the solution is, but become paralyzed in its implementation?
- Do I find myself using a lot of 'yes, buts' in discussing this problem?
- Do I find it easier to procrastinate, avoid, divert my attention, ignore or run away from this problem?
- Is this problem causing much distress and discomfort for me and/or others, and yet I remain stumped in trying to resolve it?

Step 2: If you have answered yes to any or all of the questions in Step 1, you are probably facing a problem or situation in which a blocking irrational belief is clouding your thinking. The next thing to do is to try to identify the blocking irrational belief.

- Is the blocking belief something I have believed in all my life?
- Is the blocking belief coming from the teachings of my parents, family, peers, work, society, culture, community, race, ethnic reference group or social network?
- Is the blocking belief something that always recurs when I am trying to solve problems similar to this one?
- Is the blocking belief something that has helped me solve problems successfully in the past?
- Is the blocking belief one that tends to make me dishonest with myself about this problem?
- Is the blocking belief an immobilizing concept that sparks fear of guilt or fear of rejection in my mind as I face this problem?
- Is the blocking belief something that can be stated in a sentence or two?
- Is the blocking belief a consistent statement as I face this problem, or does it tend to change as variables of this problem become more clear to me?
- Is the blocking belief a tangible statement of belief or is it simply a feeling or intuition?
- Can I state the blocking belief? If so, write it in your journal, 'My blocking belief is' and fill out your answer.

Step 3: Once you have identified the blocking belief in Step 2, test its rationality. Answer the following questions about the belief, 'yes' or 'no'.

- Is there any basis in reality to support this belief as always being true?
- Does this belief encourage personal growth, emotional maturity, independence of thinking and action, and stable mental health?
- Is this belief one which, if ascribed to, will help you overcome this or future problems in your life?
- Is this belief one which, if ascribed to, will result in behavior that is self defeating for you?

- Does this belief protect you and your rights as a person?
- Does this belief assist you in connecting honestly and openly with others so that healthy, growth engendering interpersonal relationships result?
- Does this belief assist you in being a creative, rational problem solver who is able to identify a series of alternatives from which you can choose your own personal priority solutions?
- Does this belief stifle your thinking and problem solving ability to the point of immobilization?
- When you tell others of this belief do they support you because that is the way everyone in your family, peer group, work or community thinks?
- Is this belief an absolute? Is it a black or white, yes or no, win or lose, with no options in the middle type of belief?

[Healthy answers are: 1-no, 2-yes, 3-yes, 4-no, 5-yes, 6-yes, 7-yes, 8-no, 9-no and 10-no. If you are unable to give healthy answers to one or more question in Step 2, then your blocking belief is most likely irrational.]

Step 4: Once you have determined that the blocking belief is irrational, you are ready to refute this irrational belief. Respond to the following questions in your journal -

- How do I consistently feel when I think of this belief?
- Is there anything in reality to support this belief as being true?
- What in reality supports the lack of absolute truth in this belief?
- Does the truth of this belief exist only in the way I talk, act or feel about this problem?
- What is the worst thing that could happen to me if I do not hold on to this belief?
- What positive things might happen to me if I do not hold on to this belief?
- What would be an appropriate, realistic belief I could substitute for this irrational belief?
- How would I feel if I substituted this new belief for my blocking belief?
- How will I grow and how will my rights and the rights of others be protected by this substitute belief?
- What is keeping me from accepting this alternate belief?

Once you have answered these questions, substitute a rational belief and act on it: "My substitute rational healthy belief is".

Step 5: If you still have trouble solving problems, return to Step 1 and begin again.

**TIME MANAGEMENT**

Time management is the process of structuring our lives so that we maximize our time and energy on what is most important to us; and minimize the time we spend on activities we do not value. Time management is an important tool that can help you succeed in school, work and other personal endeavors. By learning how to manage your time you will be able to -

- |                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| ❖ Achieve More             | ❖ Reduce Stress                            |
| ❖ Lead a Balanced Life     | ❖ Greater Productivity and Efficiency      |
| ❖ Have More Free Time      | ❖ Better Professional Reputation           |
| ❖ Meet Deadlines           | ❖ Increased Opportunities                  |
| ❖ Overcome Procrastination | ❖ Achieve Important Life and Career Goals. |

Failing to manage your time effectively can have some very undesirable consequences - Missed deadlines; Inefficient work flow; Poor work quality; A poor professional reputation and a stalled career; Higher stress levels etc. Spending a little time learning about time-management techniques will have huge benefits now - and throughout your career.

The first step to effective time management begins with finding out how you use your time. Do this by keeping an activity log for a week. Evaluate your results by asking yourself, “Did I accomplish what I was supposed to? Was I often pressed for time? At what time of the day was I most productive? Least productive? How much time was allotted for personal activities?” Your next step is to make a list of everything you plan to do, dividing the list into fixed commitments and flexible commitments. Fixed commitments are those tasks that you absolutely must complete by a specific deadline. Flexible commitments are obligations you can meet on a time available basis. Assign priorities to your list and set aside enough time to do the designated tasks.

**How to Manage Time**

Good time management is essential for coping with the pressures of modern life without experiencing too much stress. If you never have enough time to finish your tasks, better time management will help you regain control of your day. Good time management doesn't mean you do more work. It means you focus on the tasks that matter and will make a difference. Whether it's in your job or your lifestyle as a whole, learning how to manage your time effectively will help you feel more relaxed, focused and in control. The aim of good time management is to achieve the lifestyle balance you want. Here are the techniques for better time management -

- ❖ Establish a Timetable: Schedule fixed commitments e.g. lectures, tutorials, sports training. Also schedule in due dates for assignments, projects etc.- it is useful to bring these dates forward by a few days to give you that extra time that can provide you with an opportunity to reflect and that can also compensate for the unexpected, e.g. illnesses. Decide how you can best use the remaining time, recognizing the importance of allocating time for recreation, socializing, family, self etc.
- ❖ Plan Your Day: Begin each day with a list of things you both 'have to' and 'want to' accomplish. It is better to have more items on your list than less. A task will tend to expand with the time allocated for it. If you have one or two items on your list it is likely to take all day to do them. However if you have ten items on your list you may not complete all ten but you are likely to have completed seven or eight during the same allocation of time. A full day is better than an empty day.
- ❖ Prioritize the List: This is about knowing what is important. Rate the tasks in order of priority, and tackle them in order of importance doing the most important first. Tasks can be grouped in four categories - urgent and important; not urgent but important; urgent but not important; and neither urgent nor important. People with good time management create time to concentrate on non-urgent, important activities. By so doing, they minimize the chances of activities ever becoming urgent and important.
- ❖ Practice the 4 Ds: We can spend up to half our working day going through our email inbox, making us tired, frustrated and unproductive. A study has found that one-in-three office workers suffer from email stress. Making a decision the first time you open an email is crucial for effective time management. To manage this burden effectively, it advises practicing the 4 Ds of decision-making -
  - Delete - half of the emails you get can probably be deleted immediately.
  - Do - if the email is urgent or can be completed quickly.
  - Delegate - if the email can be better dealt with by someone else.
  - Defer - set aside time at a later date to spend on emails that require longer action.
- ❖ Work Out Your Goals: This first step towards improving your time management is to ask yourself some questions. "Work out who you want to be, your priorities in life, and what you want to achieve in your career or personal life". That is then the guiding principle for how you spend your time and how you manage it. Once you have worked out the big picture, even if it's quite general, you can then work out some short-term and medium-term goals. Knowing your goals will help you plan better and focus on the things that will help you achieve those goals.



- ❖ **Make a List:** A common time-management mistake is trying to remember too many details, leading to information overload. A better way to stay organized and take control of your projects and tasks is to use a to-do list to write things down.
- ❖ **Work Smarter, not Harder:** Good time management at work means doing high-quality work, not high quantity. It advises concentrating not on how busy you are but on results. Spending more time on something doesn't necessarily achieve more. Staying an extra hour at work at the end of the day may not be the most effective way to manage your time.
- ❖ **Organize Your Place of Work:** Ensure that your study area is a pleasant environment. Organize your books, papers etc. so that they are easily accessed, searching for things is a big time waster. Have a tidy desk.
- ❖ **Know Your Peak Times:** Decide when you have most energy as this corresponds with when you are most able to focus and concentrate. Schedule your most demanding work for these times and less demanding work for other times when energy is not as high.
- ❖ **Study Strategy:** Study for about an hour at a time then have a short break. This is an efficient study method because while you are taking a break the brain is still processing the information. Breaks between study blocks also ensure that your levels of concentration are more likely to be maintained.
- ❖ **Divide and Conquer:** A large assignment or project may appear overwhelming however it becomes manageable and achievable when broken down into several smaller parts. Complete one part at a time.
- ❖ **Allocate Thinking and Reflection Time:** After having completed a piece of writing it can be very useful to leave it for a day or two and then to return to it with new ideas and enthusiasm. Effective time management can allow you the space to do this.
- ❖ **Avoid Procrastination:** Develop strategies that help you resist being hindered by procrastination. Make decisions that are valuing of you and undermining of procrastination. It can be useful to start early in the day. Completing one small task soon after waking up is very empowering and can reduce the risk of procrastination. Reward yourself when you have successfully resisted procrastination and completed your tasks.
- ❖ **Learn How to Deal with Interruptions:** Let the person interrupting you know that you are studying and that you really need to continue. Effective time-management allows you free time so learn how to politely and assertively invite people to phone or visit you during these specific, non-study times.

- ❖ **Take Care of Yourself:** Ensure that your diet is nutritional, that you get sufficient sleep, that you get enough exercise and have time to ‘smell the roses’, plan an hour each day for ‘Me Time’.
- ❖ **Make Time for a Social Life:** Ensure that you schedule time for socializing, catching up with friends, seeing a movie, visiting family members etc. This contributes to achieving balance in your life which is beneficial to effective study.
- ❖ **Spirituality:** Life is more than study and work. Give yourself time to explore the spiritual dimension and reflect on the amazing journey that is your life. Keep the big picture in mind - value yourself and what you want to achieve in your life.
- ❖ **Save Energy:** To save it you need to know where and how you’re losing it. Eliminate negative feelings; criticism of others; defensiveness for self. As you do this, a surplus of energy will result.

### Tools for Time Management Counseling

**Put ‘first things first’ and prioritize:** The significance of importance and urgency in choosing our actions is illustrated in the chart below created by Stephen Covey, author of the book “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People”.

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	Quadrant I: Everything in this quadrant is urgent and important. There are your tasks that absolutely have to get done by yesterday. Example - Staying up all night cramming for an 8:00 a.m. test.	Quadrant II: This is where you are in planning mode. This is long-term thinking and strategy building done without the pressure of deadlines. Example - Creating a study group in the first week of the semester.
Not Important	Quadrant III: These are unimportant activities done with a sense of urgency. This quadrant often contains stuff that is urgent to someone else, but not important to you. Example - Attending a hastily called meeting that has nothing to do with your goals.	Quadrant IV: This is where you waste your time. Become more conscious of your choices and minimize wasting the irreplaceable hours of the day. Example - Mindlessly watching television until 4:00 a.m.

**Define your goals:** Goals give us the following -

- meaning and direction for our lives ;

- a means in which we can evaluate our progress;
- a plan to follow.

Goals keep us focused so we don't go astray.

**Create a to-do list:** Organize what you have to do. Split up large projects into small parts. Create a to-do list for each part. Take your goals and break them down into small, measurable steps.

**Finish what you start:** If interrupted, return to finish your task. Set an upper limit for how many tasks you want in progress at any given time.

**Set aside specific study time:** Complete complex tasks first, or during your best time of day. Set specific times for yourself with dates and times. Don't schedule study marathons. For every hour you are in class per week, plan on two hours of studying outside of class.

**Identify your time wasters:** Time wasters are not only actions in Quadrant IV, but also can be indecision, lack of planning, jumping from project to project, a disorganized desk, procrastination, insisting on perfection. Finish one project before starting the next. You'll save time not having to reacquaint yourself with each project.

**Use email filtering software:** Stop wasting time scanning for junk email and deleting them.

**Be project specific before you sit down at your PC:** Have you ever sat down at your PC to do homework, but after a half-hour or an hour passes by, you have accomplished nothing towards your homework? By being project specific at the computer, you can focus on one item and be more efficient. You can also avoid wasting time on Quadrant IV items. Also, use the 20-20-20 rule - Every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away to refocus your eyes, and blink 20 times to moisten your eyes.

**Set aside specific time when you browse the Internet:** Many people jump online and set out to do one thing, but then get caught up in browsing forums or they look at a new product or get involved in email. Set aside time to check your email, go onto My Space, up-date your iTunes or PDA outside of time for doing homework. Use a separate file or system for information. Set aside 20 minutes to catch up on newsletters for information.

**Two-minute pick-up:** Practice the 'two-minute pick-up' every time you leave a room or your desk. Before you leave a room, turn around and quickly put away everything for two minutes. The more you put away before you leave, the smoother your transition when you return and the less you have to distract you at your desk.

**Avoid procrastination:** You can do anything for 10 minutes. To get yourself started on something that you have been procrastinating on, grab a timer and set it for 10 minutes. Then do that one thing for 10 minutes. If you continue on after that, great! If

not, you at least put 10 minutes into that task.

**Delay gratification:** Give yourself some rewards for completing tasks. Treat yourself to dessert after you have avoided procrastination. Don't go out to eat until you have completed items off your to-do list. At the same time, don't allow yourself to buy that new pair of jeans if you haven't completed your tasks.

### **Tips to Improve Time Management Skills**

When you learn and maintain good time management skills, you'll find freedom from deadline pressure and from stress in general. You'll be more productive, procrastinate less, and have more time to relax, which helps further decrease stress and anxiety. Time management skills are like shoes or a good pair of jeans - you may have to try several pair before you find just the right fit. They're different for each person and you have to find what works best for you.

1. **Make A List.** The thing about making lists is that you actually have to use them. You may want to set reminders on your phone and computer. Lists really do work if you use them. One of the most important things is to make sure your list feels attainable. No one wants a 30-item to-do list and have to, at the end of the day, look at the 20 items that didn't get done. Prioritize yours and others' needs and plan accordingly. You might even want to make three lists - personal, home and work.
2. **Set Deadlines.** Again, there is no point in setting deadlines if you make executive decisions to always push them back. Set a deadline and try your best to stick to it. Set your deadline a few days before the task absolutely has to be done. This allows for the possibility that other things will get in the way, but also allow for you still to get the task done.
3. **Stop Multi-tasking.** Multi-taskers often seem to think they get more accomplished, but it's not always the most productive or efficient route. Let's face it, our minds work better when we are truly able to focus and concentrate on one thing.
4. **Delegate Responsibilities.** For those of us who like to be in control the very thought of this is likely to provoke a bit of anxiety. The truth of the matter is that no matter how good we are, we can't do everything. Sometimes we take on more than we can handle. Delegation is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of intelligence. Find competent, reliable people and share some of the responsibilities. It will allow you to be less stressed and more productive.
5. **Use Your Downtime.** This tip requires some balance. Using all of your downtime for planning and prioritizing is bad and can lead to increased stress and burnout. However, if you find yourself sitting in early morning traffic, this may be a good

time to start prioritizing your day or making plans for dinner. If you're waiting in the doctor's office, this may be a good time to write the grocery list (Just don't forget it.). If you have opportunities like these make the best of them, but also remember to use them for relaxation as needed.

6. **Reward Yourself.** When you accomplish something, celebrate it. How you celebrate is up to you. My word of advice is to keep whatever you choose to do healthy, make sure it's something you really enjoy, don't do it in excess, and don't let it cause you to get further behind.

Time management skills are an essential part of making your day just a little easier. Find what works for you and stick to it.

### **Benefits of Time Management**

Time management means staying on top of your time, life, and activities. It shouldn't take extreme effort, but it does require discipline. However, the benefits of time management far outweigh the work required. Here are 10 life benefits of time management -

- ❖ **Less Stress:** Managing your time can directly reduce your stress level. Fewer surprises; fewer tight deadlines. Less rushing from task-to-task and place-to-place.
- ❖ **Get More Done:** Of course, being productive is one of the main goals of time management. When you are aware of what you need to do, you are able to better manage your workload. You will be able to get more (of the right tasks) done in less time.
- ❖ **Less Rework:** Being organized results in less rework and mistakes. Forgotten items, details, and instructions lead to extra work.
- ❖ **Less Life Friction and Problems:** How often do you create your own problems? Whether it is a forgotten appointment or missed deadline, not managing your time results in increased life friction. Avoid creating your own problems by planning and preparing for your day.
- ❖ **More Free Time:** We can't create more time, but you can make better use of it by managing your time. Even simple actions like shifting your commute or getting your work done early can produce more leisure time in your life.
- ❖ **Less Wasted Time:** When you know what you need to do, you waste less time in idle activities. Instead of wondering what you should be doing next, you can already be a step ahead of your work.
- ❖ **More Opportunities:** Being on top of your time and work produces more opportunities. The early bird always has more options. As well, luck favors the prepared.

- ❖ **Improves Your Reputation:** Your time management reputation will precede you. At work and in life you will be known as reliable. No one is going to question whether you are going to show up, do what you say you are going to do, or meet that deadline.
- ❖ **Less Effort:** A common misconception is that time management takes extra effort. To the contrary, proper time management makes your life easier. Things take less effort, whether it is packing for that trip or finishing up that project.
- ❖ **More Time Where it Matters:** Managing your time is allotting your time where it has the most impact. Time management allows you to spend your time on the things that matter most to you.
- ❖ **Manage Your Time, Improve Your Life:** Time management is all about spending your time in the right places, and on the right things. It's about knowing your priorities, obligations, and schedule. When you manage your time, you benefit in all areas of life.

### STRESS AND TIME MANAGEMENT MYTHS

#### **Myths About Stress**

Misunderstandings about stress can lead to more of it in our lives. Here are six points offered by the 'American Psychological Association' to help you dispel common myths about stress.

Myth - 1: *Stress is the same for everyone.*

Not true. We each have a different threshold for letting things get to us and we all react to stress differently. Some people withdraw; some people experience anxiety; some lose their cool. Identifying what your triggers are and what you tend to do under stress are essential first steps in developing a successful stress management routine.

Myth - 2: *Stress is bad.*

Stress can be bad, but not always. In fact, in some circumstances, stress can help you survive a dangerous situation (the normal fight or flight response). Stress also can be a great motivator to getting things done. Whether stress is 'good' or 'bad' has more to do with the amount of stress in your life and how you manage it rather than a simple positive or negative valence.

Myth - 3: *Stress is everywhere, so you just have to live with it.*

Many aspects of today's world (a bad economy, long work hours, over-scheduling, etc.) lead to increased stress for many people. But stress is not everywhere and you don't have to simply accept it. You can shape your life in such a way that you have stress-free time during your day. You also can develop effective strategies for managing those experiences in your life that you do find stressful. Prioritizing,

breaking down complicated tasks into smaller, simpler projects, and effective time management strategies are just a few of the ways to reduce stress.

*Myth - 4: The most popular strategies for reducing stress are the best ones.*

This is a dangerous myth to believe because it leads people to force themselves to engage in activities that are ‘supposed’ to relieve stress even though those strategies may not be effective strategies for their unique lifestyle and personality. There is no one-size-fits-all stress management program. Many of the clients find yoga extremely stressful whereas others live by it as a way to reduce stress. The best stress management plan is the one that fits your unique needs and interests. If you try to force stress management routines in your life because they seem to be working so well for others, you’re likely to add to your stress rather than decrease it.

*Myth - 5: No symptoms, no stress.*

Not true. An absence of symptoms does not equate to an absence of stress. Over time, chronic stress will eventually cause your mind and body to start wearing out (fatigue, loss of productivity, forgetfulness, etc.). But this can take years, sometimes decades. Don’t ignore the stress in your life simply because you may not be suffering at this moment. Developing healthy stress management routines early in life will go a long way in helping you get through the more challenging time when they arise.

*Myth - 6: Only major symptoms of stress require attention.*

Minor symptoms of stress will eventually turn into major symptoms of stress if not effectively managed. Think of the minor signs of stress (headaches, feeling tired, etc.) as warning flags. The most important thing to remember is that while there are many ways to reduce stress, the key to effective stress management is rarely some seven-day or 30-day program that tells you what to do to relax or how to find ‘balance’. The key is discovering your own stress management program, one that works for you and your lifestyle, then making the commitment to incorporate it into your life.

### **Myths About Time**

Most individuals would like to achieve their goals and dreams in less time, with less effort and with lower stress. And, they want to have confidence in their ability to control their time and their lives in ways that allow them to be highly productive while maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Quite often, however, people feel a very real sense of frustration. They seem unable to get everything done during the day and rarely leave work at a decent hour with a feeling that they have actually moved closer to their goals. The reason for these frustrations is the fact that most people struggle with identifying the critical skills and strategies required to attain their goals in a streamlined, effective and stress-free fashion. In addition,

common myths and misconceptions about effective time management cause us to go astray in our efforts to achieve the important goals we envision for our businesses and our lives - and become obstacles in our path to success. Here are the more common myths -

Myth - 1: *We can manage time.*

We cannot manage time. Nor can we save it. Time ticks away relentlessly in spite of our efforts to control it. We are provided with 24 hours of time each day to use as we like. The key is in how we use that time. We can use it wisely, or we can waste it, but we can never save it. At the end of the day, it's gone.

Myth - 2: *'To do' lists help get things done.*

'To do' lists do nothing to further a project or task. They simply remind us that they are not done yet. Scheduling time in your planner as appointments with yourself helps get tasks done. 'To do' lists are intentions; scheduled blocks of time are commitments.

Myth - 3: *Time is money.*

Time is more than money, its life. You can always get more money, but you can never get more time. It's an irreplaceable resource. When time's gone, you're gone.

Myth - 4: *I work best under pressure.*

On the surface this sounds like a positive attribute. But, in reality, they are such great procrastinators that they put everything off until the deadline for completion. Alternately, they lack self-motivation to the degree that they need the external pressure of a looming deadline to get any work done at all. Either way, it is highly dubious they will produce their 'best' work under those conditions. That's because no one can produce their optimal work at the very last second. It's simply impossible.

Myth - 5: *The biggest time wasters - telephone interruptions, visitors, meetings and rush jobs.*

These are not time wasters, they are time obligations - they come with the job. The biggest time wasters are self-imposed, such as procrastination, making mental notes, interrupting us, searching for things, perfectionism and spending time on trivial tasks. We are our own worst enemies. Being effective involves managing ourselves, not placing the blame on others.

Myth - 6: *It's more efficient to stick to one task until it's completed.*

It may be more efficient, but it's not more effective, for you will often not have time to finish it. It's more effective to break large projects into small one or two-hour chunks and work at them for a brief period each day. Working on priorities involves frequent brief sprints, not occasional marathons.



Myth - 7: *We should have one planner for the office, and a separate planner for the home.*

We should have one planner, period. We are only one person, sharing our lives with people and activities at work, at home, at school, etc. Since we only have one life, we should only have one planner. Both business and personal activities should be scheduled in the same planner so business activities don't take precedence over personal and family activities.

Myth - 8: *Procrastination is always bad.*

It is quite common to try to avoid doing activities that we do not enjoy, we are not comfortable doing, we feel are boring, or for which we believe we are not particularly well suited. Psychologists have studied procrastination for decades and have discovered what they believe to be some of the root causes for delay or avoidance of tasks. But, regardless of the psychology behind this habit, putting off tasks, for any reason, can be costly. Even small amounts of procrastination can keep us from achieving critical goals, meeting deadlines, or living our lives to the fullest. And, as a result, procrastination can negatively impact the success of our businesses, and our lives. So, procrastination can, indeed, be an extremely counterproductive habit if we are putting off doing the things that we should be doing; especially if it is the avoidance of the select group of tasks, which effectively lead to attaining our long-rang goals. However, there are times when the strategy of 'Selective Procrastination' can be an asset to our time management agenda.

Myth - 9: *Other people seem to have more time to get things done than I do.*

Everyone has the same 24 hours (1,440 minutes or 86,400 seconds) available every day - no more and no less. It's just that some people are more proficient at using their time than others. And, typically, those individuals who effectively manage their use of time are more successful at everything else, as well. That's because they have developed strategies for getting the most important things done first.

Myth - 10: *Multitasking abilities help get more accomplished in less time.*

Recent research has shown that multitasking in more intense environments, where critical outcomes are at stake, can seriously inhibit our ability to learn new skills, slows the processing of information, reduces productivity and usually degrades the overall quality of results we achieve. Obviously, there are times when focusing on a singular task is not always possible. But, to the degree we can control our use of multitasking, it is best to keep it to a minimum. Stop thinking of multitasking as a positive endeavor, and discover the true benefits of focused, incremental work strategies. You will actually become more productive and effective in the long run.

**Myths About Stress and Time Management**

Myth # 1: *All stress is bad.* No, there's good and bad stress. Good stress is excitement, thrills, etc. The goal is to recognize personal signs of bad stress and deal with them.

Myth # 2: *Planning my time just takes more time.* Actually, research shows the opposite.

Myth # 3: *I get more done in more time when I wisely use caffeine, sugar, alcohol or nicotine.* Wrong! Research shows that the body always has to 'come down' and when it does, you can't always be very effective then after the boost.

Myth # 4: *A time management problem means that there's not enough time to get done what needs to get done.* No, a time management problem is not using your time to your fullest advantage, to get done what you want done.

Myth # 5: *The busier I am, the better I'm using my time.* Look out! You may only be doing what's urgent, and not what's important.

Myth # 6: *I feel very harried, busy, so I must have a time management problem.* Not necessarily. You should verify that you have a time management problem. This requires knowing what you really want to get done and if it is getting done or not.

Myth # 7: *I feel OK, so I must not be stressed.* In reality, many adults don't even know when they're really stressed out until their bodies tell them so. They miss the early warning signs from their body, for example, headaches, stiff backs, twitches, etc.

Myth # 8: *Time management involves getting more done in less time.* Some people may believe that, but effective time management refers to doing fewer things of greater importance. We cannot possibly do everything we want to do, or all the things there are to do. But if we prioritize what there is to do, and focus on completing the priorities to the exclusion of everything else, we will be more effective.

Myth # 9: *A 'quiet hour' is a great time management tool.* A 'quiet hour' is a figment of time management writers' imaginations. There is no such thing as a 'quiet hour'. We can reduce interruptions, but never eliminate them. To be effective, we must learn to work in spite of the interruptions. Frequently, interruptions are not time wasters, but opportunities arriving at inopportune times.

Myth # 10: *Today's technology improves time management abilities.* Technology has definitely made it more 'convenient' to transfer and access information. But, the reality is that it has generated information overload, more than it has helped us manage our time. Technology has also changed our perspective on just how

‘available’ we feel we should be. And, as a result, many of us have allowed ourselves to be positioned in a constant state of ‘readiness’ - anxiously awaiting the next piece of information or digital communication that comes our way - so we can immediately respond. More often we have become slaves of the technology; whereby cellular calls, text and email, for example, all too often end up controlling us - rather than us controlling them.

### **Wise Principles of Good Stress and Time Management**

- ❖ Learn your signs for being overstressed or having a time management problem. Ask your friends about you. Perhaps they can tell you what they see from you when you’re overstressed.
- ❖ Most people feel that they are stressed and/or have a time management problem. Verify that you really have a problem. What do you see, hear or feel that leads you to conclude that you have a time or stress problem?
- ❖ Don’t have the illusion that doing more will make you happier. Is it quantity of time that you want, or quality?
- ❖ Stress and time management problems have many causes and usually require more than one technique to fix. You don’t need a lot of techniques, usually more than one, but not a lot.
- ❖ One of the major benefits of doing time planning is feeling that you’re in control.
- ❖ Focus on results, not on busyness.

### **References**

- Kabir, S.M.S.** (2017). *Essentials of Counseling*. Abosar Prokashana Sangstha, ISBN: 978-984-8798-22-5, Banglabazar, Dhaka-1100.
- Kabir, S.M.S.** (2016). *Basic Guidelines for Research: An Introductory Approach for All Disciplines*. Book Zone Publication, ISBN: 978-984-33-9565-8, Chittagong-4203, Bangladesh.
- Kabir, S.M.S., Mostafa, M.R., Chowdhury, A.H., & Salim, M.A.A.** (2016). *Bangladesher Samajtattwa (Sociology of Bangladesh)*. Protik Publisher, ISBN: 978-984-8794-69-2, Dhaka-1100.
- Kabir, S.M.S.** (2018). Psychological health challenges of the hill-tracts region for climate change in Bangladesh. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry, Elsevier*, 34, 74–

77.

- Kabir, S.M.S.**, Aziz, M.A., & Jahan, A.K.M.S. (2018). Women Empowerment and Governance in Bangladesh. *ANTYAJAA: Indian journal of Women and Social Change*, SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd, 3(1), 1-12.
- Alam, S.S. & **Kabir, S.M.S.** (2015). Classroom Management in Secondary Level: Bangladesh Context. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 5(8), 1-4, ISSN 2250-3153, www.ijsrp.org.
- Alam, S.S., **Kabir, S.M.S.**, & Aktar, R. (2015). General Observation, Cognition, Emotion, Social, Communication, Sensory Deficiency of Autistic Children. *Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing*, 6(7), 663-666, ISSN-p-2229-5356,e-2321-3698.
- Kabir, S.M.S.** (2013). Positive Attitude Can Change Life. *Journal of Chittagong University Teachers' Association*, 7, 55-63.
- Kabir, S.M.S.** & Mahtab, N. (2013). Gender, Poverty and Governance Nexus: Challenges and Strategies in Bangladesh. *Empowerment a Journal of Women for Women*, Vol. 20, 1-12.
- Kabir, S.M.S.** & Jahan, A.K.M.S. (2013). Household Decision Making Process of Rural Women in Bangladesh. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, ISSN: 2279-0845, Vol,10, Issue 6 (May. - Jun. 2013), 69-78. ISSN (Online): 2279-0837; Impact Factor (JCC):1.589.
- Jahan, A.K.M.S., Mannan, S.M., & **Kabir, S.M.S.** (2013). Designing a Plan for Resource Sharing among the Selected Special Libraries in Bangladesh, *International Journal of Library Science and Research (IJLSR)*, ISSN 2250-2351, Vol. 3, Issue 3, Aug 2013, 1-20, ISSN: 2321-0079.
- Kabir, S.M.S.** & Jahan, I. (2009). Anxiety Level between Mothers of Premature Born Babies and Those of Normal Born Babies. *The Chittagong University Journal of Biological Science*, 4(1&2), 131-140.
- Kabir, S.M.S.**, Amanullah, A.S.M., & Karim, S.F. (2008). Self-esteem and Life Satisfaction of Public and Private Bank Managers. *The Dhaka University*

*Journal of Psychology*, 32, 9-20.

**Kabir, S.M.S.**, Amanullah, A.S.M., Karim, S.F., & Shafiqul, I. (2008). Mental Health and Self-esteem: Public Vs. Private University Students in Bangladesh. *Journal of Business and Technology*, 3, 96-108.

**Kabir, S.M.S.**, Shahid, S.F.B., & Karim, S.F. (2007). Personality between Housewives and Working Women in Bangladesh. *The Dhaka University Journal of Psychology*, 31, 73-84.

**Kabir, S.M.S.** & Karim, S.F. (2005). Influence of Type of Bank and Sex on Self-esteem, Life Satisfaction and Job Satisfaction. *The Dhaka University Journal of Psychology*, 29, 41-52.

**Kabir, S.M.S.** & Rashid, U.K. (2017). Interpersonal Values, Inferiority Complex, and Psychological Well-Being of Teenage Students. *Jagannath University Journal of Life and Earth Sciences*, 3(1&2), 127-135.