



Stress Busters

Simple Strategies in 5 minutes or less

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Introduction

Stress is a natural part of our lives. No matter how much we hope and pray that it will go away, stress is here to stay. The key is to manage stress so that stress doesn't manage us. When we don't manage it effectively, our productivity, behaviour, mental and general health are impacted. Some of the conditions that are directly related to stress are heart disease, diabetes, chronic fatigue, depression and anxiety to name a few.

Why can stress be so detrimental? Our stress reaction, or what is known as the fight or flight response, is actually a life saving mechanism. It's meant to mobilize our bodies so we can either stay and fight or take flight and leave the situation. Once the stressor or threatening situation disappears, our bodies relax and go back to its normal state.

In the days when we were fighting saber tooth tigers and other natural enemies, this response was invaluable. Today we react to less threatening situations with the exact same reaction. Work deadlines, traffic jams and computer problems elicit the fight or flight response. Additionally we are constantly bombarded by these circumstances so our body never gets a chance to recover and reset itself. The symptoms that initially helped us are now detrimental.

In our fast paced societies many of us believe that stress is a "normal" part of our lives or only recognize the extent of our stress once we're sick. This isn't a useful strategy so the first step in managing stress is recognizing it. Once we recognize its negative long term effects, we can become accountable and develop an appropriate and simple plan.

The best way to get the most out of this book is as follows:

1. Read through all 35 stress busting strategies and see which ones appeal to you. Then put a check mark in the box beside the strategies that can be easily incorporated into your busy life.
2. Fill out the stress busting action plan at the end of the book.
3. Post your action in a place that will remind you and help you keep your stress busting commitment.

Stress Busting Tips

- 1. **Take 10 deep slow breaths** - Why? Breathing is one of the easiest systems to control in order to relax (Dr John Mason, *Guide to Stress Reduction*). Close your door or put on a headset so your colleagues won't be disturbed. Close your eyes. Take 10 deep slow breaths where the exhalation is longer than each inhalation. As you breathe, make sure your abdomen fills up like a balloon when you inhale and sinks in when you exhale. Very quickly you will feel more relaxed and able to refocus.
- 2. **Guided meditation** - Try a guided meditation that you can easily access on your ipod, computer or smartphone. A guided meditation is so simple because all you need to do is listen and relax. You can find great guided CDs by Jon Kabat Zinn, Deepak Chopra or Jack Kornfield in almost any book store. To start with a quick 3 minute meditation, click on http://www.watershedtraining.ca/Guided_Meditation.asp.
- 3. **Hand acupressure** - Stimulate the points below by pressing on them for about a minute on one side of the body and then repeat on the other side. Press hard enough to cause a comfortable pain.

Acupoint 11

On the largest crease of the inner wrist, on a line with the little finger



Acupoint 15

On the middle finger, just above the nail, on the side closest to the thumb



Acupoint 21

In the middle of the sole of the foot, just behind the ball



- 4. **Ear Rubbing** - The ears contain reflexology points so rubbing your ears is highly therapeutic *and* relaxing.

Sit somewhere quiet and comfortable. Keep your back straight. Use your thumbs and index finger to rub your ears from top to bottom. Imagine that you are trying to unroll your ears and repeat several times.

- 5. **Stress Journal** - Monitor your stressors and your reactions in a stress journal. This will enable you to see what events cause you stress, how you react to them and how you cope. Initially your coping response may not be as good as you would like it. By reviewing each situation and identifying other reactions, you can teach yourself better coping skills.

Time	Stressful Event	Reaction (symptoms - Thoughts - behaviours)	Coping Response
9:30	Late for meeting with supervisor	Stomach tight, fear about performance review	Talked with John and felt better
5:30	Meeting ran overtime and couldn't leave at normal time	Headache	Walked a few blocks to the subway

- 6. **Stretch** - Tension and stress build in your body throughout the day especially if you are sitting at a desk or working at a computer. Make a habit of getting up every hour to stretch your muscles, paying special attention to your wrists, arms and shoulders. Some of the benefits of stretching include increased energy, better circulation, reduced muscle tension, improved posture and relaxation. Stretching is easy and can be done almost anywhere.

- 7. **Laugh** - Break out the cartoons, funny shows, and hilarious quotes or try laughter yoga (Visit www.laughter-yoga.ca for club listings). Also consider getting together with a colleague for a short break to kid around. According to Dr. William Fry of Stanford University, 20 seconds of laughter is equivalent to 3 minutes of hard rowing.

Laughter is the perfect stress buster because it reverses all the physical signs of stress (e.g. tense muscles, rapid shallow breathing, and presence of stress hormones). It also gives you a psychological break and distance from your stressors. Visit www.laughter-yoga.ca and click on *Need a Laugh* to help get you started.

- 8. **Take a walk** - Go for a walk even if it's for only 5 minutes. It will get you away from your desk, give you an opportunity to view your stress/stressors from a different perspective and allow you to return to work with a fresh perspective. Besides the exercise will do you good.

About the Author

Prior to starting Watershed Training Solutions, Wendy spent most of her career in mutual fund marketing and training working for such outstanding organizations as Dynamic Mutual Funds, Richardson Greenshields and RBC Dominion Securities. In 2000, she helped launch www.advisor.ca, a website for financial advisors, in under 2 months.

In 2003 Wendy Woods founded Watershed Training Solutions, a dynamic training company. Her workshops include stress management, productive teamwork and Emotional Intelligence as well as many other critical workplace skills. Wendy's enthusiastic and engaging training style energizes and motivates her participants. Her years of hands-on business and adult education experience, complimented by an M.B.A. and Certificate in Adult Education, provide her clients with productive and bottom-line results.

Wendy has spoken throughout North America receiving rave reviews. Her clients include such world class organizations as Ernst & Young, Johnson & Johnson and TD Bank Financial Group. Wendy's expertise has been featured in such media as *CTV News*, *Breakfast Television*, *Rogers Daytime*, *Classical 96.3*, *Entertainment Tonight Canada* and *Canadian Business Online*.

About Watershed Training Solutions

Watershed Training Solutions' goal is *Making the Workplace Flow* for employees, teams and organizations. Our focus is on employee engagement and talent management which we support with assessments, keynotes, training and coaching. Our sessions cover a wide range of topics which include:

- Emotional Intelligence
- Networking
- Stress Management
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Managing Conflict
- Influence

We also have a F.L.O.W. certificate program for leaders.

To find out how Watershed Training Solutions can help your organization, contact us at info@watershedtraining.ca or 1-416-926-9450. Also please check out our website at www.watershedtraining.ca.



Making the Workplace Flow