

KEY *to* STRESS-FREE LIVING

Stress Management for Wellness



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Stress Management for Wellness

Dr. Jyotsna Codaty



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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my family who put up with me in my times of stress, to my many friends who helped me at every step and to my readers who I hope, will SMILE!

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PREFACE

This book is a happy book.

This book is about enjoying life.

This book is about making choices.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that not all of life's outcomes are chosen. The attempt is to make clear what people can control and what they cannot.

The theme of this book is:

That a person's state of health is, to a great extent, his own responsibility.

To create awareness, so that lifestyle choices can be made.

To emphasise that problems are not common to all individuals, as the reactions to them are not.

Obviously, the solutions are a matter of choice. There are no definite black or white areas.

The book is positive; its emphasis is on what to do and not so much on what not to do.

—Dr. Jyotsna Codaty

Chapter 1

The Beginning

Stress initially, was used in the biological context in the beginning of the 20th Century. Signs of stress may be cognitive, emotional, physical or behaviour that include poor judgement, negative outlook in general, excessive worry, change of mood, irritation while working, agitation, problem in relaxing, feeling isolated, abnormal heartbeat, eating too much or not enough withdrawal from society, avoiding responsibilities, increased consumption of alcohol or drugs, habits showing nervousness, nail biting, lack of concentration, forgetfulness, indigestion, loss of appetite, weight loss or weight gain, and headache with constant fatigue.

There was a time long ago when people were happy most of the time. They had a little land, they made their own clothes, hunted their own food and built their own houses depending on where they lived. They found their life partners, had children, and the children grew up doing much the same as their parents did.

Even then, they had their own share of problems. They had wild animals to ward off, they were concerned about finding their next meal, they had floods and fires, and being human, they had their quarrels. Some were sorted out, some ended by drawing blood. They had invaders to fight and fend off. On the whole, they had a life, they had leisure, they lived and died without too much ado.

Down the centuries, society built its walls and its dogma around man. Life followed set patterns. The houses

got better, the clothes got finer. The food was cooked to established standards, a social hierarchy was set up, animals were harnessed for work in fields and to draw carriages. Some were even domesticated as man's best friend. Simple tools were crafted, and men and women continued to live at a leisurely pace.

There were floods and fires and invaders to fight and fob off. There was money to earn, clothes and houses to buy, and being human, there were fights and conflicts—for land, for money and for women. Thus, along with leisure they had to go through a lot of tough manual labour that made man tired and yet fulfilled at the end of the day. Women too had plenty to do around the house, looking after the animals, collecting firewood and cooking for large families.

Today, we have our houses, we have our cars, we have our computers, and we have our paraphrenalia of gadgetry to help us get things done. We have our organisers to remind us what we have to get done today. We no longer fight wars, our governments do that for us, and we have television and the media to tell us what is happening around the world. And we have to fight a system that is so flawed that most of our time goes, if not fighting it, then at least talking about it. And we have our doctors that tell us we need to relax, and ask us, are you under stress? And we pay money to teachers/doctors/gurus to tell us how to get rid of stress.

We are stressed out while going to sleep. We are stressed out getting up, we are stressed out from not eating properly, we are stressed out from eating the wrong things, we are stressed out about our children, or so stressed that we cannot have children. We are stressed out searching for better jobs, or stressed out from keeping our job. We are stressed out from not having proper help at home, or we are stressed out trying to find better ones, and we are so stressed out that even our three-year-old child is stressed out and needs therapy!

“Stop the world. I want to get off!”

Did you feel like shouting these words aloud, or at least saying them to yourself? Better still, did the pace of today's world tempt you to be like a farmer, who rested beside the brook singing a song? His simple life that brought him so much tranquility is definitely worth emulating.

*Mine be a cot beside the hill;
A bee-hive's hum shall soothe my ear;
A willowy brook that turns the mill,
With many a fall shall linger near.
The swallow, oft, beneath my thatch
Shall twitter from her clay built nest;
Oft shall the pilgrim lift the latch,
And share my meal, a welcome guest.
Around my ivied porch shall spring
Each fragrant flower that drinks the dew;
And Lucy, at her wheel, shall sing
In russet gown and apron blue.
The village church among the trees,
Where first our marriage vows were given,
With merry peals shall swell the breeze
And point with taper spire to Heaven.*

—S. Rogers

I wish life were that simple, a matter of buying a cottage down the hill with a brook flowing beside and your wife humming a song! Somewhere along the way, we got so entangled with the world around us that we changed. Changed so much that our life's goals appear to have altered to such an extent that we seem to be living simply. We have changed to an actively consumerist and existentialist society.

Early man was scared of wild animals and mostly died while hunting. As time passed other living forms, albeit much smaller than him in size, began to get the better of him. He began to fall ill with different diseases caused

by various bacteria. Today, we are again on the verge of victory; with our intelligence and effort, we have conquered many of them and rid the world of nearly most of them. Sadly, we became prey to illnesses of our own making, illnesses of our own lifestyle, and illnesses caused by our own wrong choices.

Metaphorically running to keep pace with our own internal demons, to foist on our psyche, our ever-increasing ambitions and desires, all in the name of keeping pace with the times, and rationalising that in today's competitive world there is no place for complacency.

- Do we not owe ourselves some answers before we begin to understand the so-called whims of today's living patterns?
- Do we not owe ourselves simple plain good health?
- Do we not owe ourselves a sense of self-esteem?
- Do we not owe ourselves the right to choose?
- Do we not owe ourselves a stress-free life?

To realise the chaos caused by our attitude, I will start with some statistics. Not the most exciting of beginnings, but a point from where we get a good perspective of the issues concerned. The primary causes of disease and death in the last century and the present one have been as follows:

20th Century	21st Century
Tuberculosis	Heart disease
Pneumonia	Cancer
Stroke	Accidents
Infectious diseases	Suicide
Kidney diseases	Diabetes Substance abuse Lung disease Stroke AIDS

You will notice that the profile of mortality and morbidity has totally changed in the past century from what was beyond one's control to what seems to be a matter of wrong choices. Those of you who were born in the 50's or later, will recognise a certain change in the illness patterns and also in people's reactions to them. In those days, a heart attack was something that happened in the mid or early fifties and there was very little to be done. In the 70's, it became a disease afflicting 40-year-olds, and by the time we entered 80's, people started coming home from foreign countries with a new set of arteries. This did not reduce the incidence of heart attack. Though the victims these days are only in their mid 30's, they have pretty good chance to be hit by stress syndrome.

The same goes for the increasing number of cancers, and the newer diseases like AIDS. In the new millennium though, we seem to be seeing some light at the end of the tunnel.

A wave of awareness has commenced, and its effect will spread. The era of choices has begun!

To begin to sort out what is troubling us, it is essential to first define the state of well-being.

And we will begin this quest with a voyage of self discovery,

A voyage where we will search for what we really want from life,

A voyage to identify the real new you.

