

STRESS MASTERY

You know how stress affects you, and you might employ a method for dealing with it including exercising, watching television, meditation, yoga, or massage. These approaches help the symptoms of stress *after* the body has been impacted. The more effective approach is to stop it entirely or at least interrupt it as it is occurring.

What I want to do is look at what is driving it, how the mind and body become conditioned to it, and provide practical tools to help you interrupt those patterns, regulate your nervous system, and help you return to a greater sense of presence and power.

Let's dive in.

What is it?

Stress is a biological response where the nervous system limits or shuts down certain organ functions like digestion, reproduction, stops cellular repair, and diverts blood from the cognitive area of the brain to generate additional cortisone, adrenaline and other chemicals to give the body energy and strength to fight or flee.

Let's distinguish between intensity and stress. Intensity can be a joyful or pleasurable immersive flow feeling, but the nervous system has not flipped on the fight or flight response. Stress is when the muscles tighten, the breath is shortened, and the brain is in hyper alertness.

Stress is difficult to dismantle because the brain can redefine its homeostatic state, meaning stress can become the repeated preferred state of the body.

Why care?

Even if you handle stress well and find it motivates you, the reason you should be concerned is that even positive low-grade stress can be detrimental to the body. Research shows that stress...

- Breaks down the immune system
- Impacts the reproduction system
- Disrupts sleep
- Impacts brain function and memory
- Causes cellular aging
- Contributes to chronic pain
- Creates elevated risk of heart issues

Love the rush?

What if you love the feeling of stress? It motivates you, gives you energy?
Let's unpack the mechanics of the mind to find out where the love started.

The job of the mind is to support survival, and it does this by creating hooks and routines. A *hook* is anything that the mind decides is positive or negative. It supports survival or it deems it to be a threat. Hooks are deeply imprinted and can come from experiences that then become memories or as learned beliefs from others. The mind then creates *routines* to support or avoid hooks.

The problem is the mind doesn't know the difference between a healthy or unhealthy hook. For example, stress triggers the release of cortisol and dopamine, causing a temporary euphoric effect, and the pleasure creates a positive hook, which the mind labels as 'excitement' or 'aliveness'. Using memory, the mind looks back to see what caused it such as deadlines, gossiping, and complaining.

The mind will want to create a routine of the activity, which activates the low emotional energetic of desire. Desire is a destructive emotion because any achieved reward will usually be temporary, which restarts the desire routine again and living in a constant state of desire can create physical and mental destruction. If you have hooks and routines that are disrupting your health, relationships, or finances, seek a 12-step program or professional help for support.

Do you have a positive hook to stress?

- Stress feels like what you do matters?
- Stress helps you get more accomplished?
- Not having stress feels wrong?
- Stress feels good.

Regardless of your relationship to stress the following steps can be helpful anytime you feel out of flow. You can break any routines and hooks with AAC, Aware, Ask Care:

Bring *awareness* to yourself. In Quantum Physics it's called the "observer effect", which is the phenomenon where the simple act of observing a particle alters its physical state and behavior. Ask yourself questions to activate conscious choice, and then take *care* of the nervous system

- 1) Start becoming AWARE when even subtle stress is present. The goal is to bring forward what has been an unconscious routine.

Subtle stress can look like:

- a. Tension in the body
- b. Hyper focus without taking breaks

- 2) Ask yourself two powerful questions from the book and seminar [*The Sedona Method* by Hale Dwoskin](#) to address the desire.

- a. Can I welcome these sensations?

If your body is experiencing any sensations, welcoming them will have the sensations process out more quickly.

- b. Can I let go of the need for these sensations?

Choosing to let go of the *need* is a conscious choice to break the desire routine, directing the mind to the new healthier state of release.

Keep asking the questions until the answer is yes.

- 3) Sometimes the nervous system needs additional care to interrupt the stress response
Here are two ways to CARE for the body:

- a. Run cold water on your wrists or apply an ice pack to your neck, stimulating the Vagus nerve to calm your body.
- b. Do the physiological sigh:

You inhale one long inhale through the nose followed by a second short inhale also through the nose and then one long exhale through the mouth, putting all your attention on the breath. This technique has been proven to lower heart rate and calm the nervous system. You can see a demonstration [here](#).

Got it handled?

Do you think you have stressed handled. If someone angers or irritates you at work, is your response you push it aside or ignore it? This is called suppression. Afterall we are not supposed to express those feelings. We also avoid feeling the uncomfortable lower emotions of sadness and fear.

However, any emotional reaction that isn't fully experienced becomes energy that is stored in the unconscious body and eventually becomes stress. Everyone has a threshold in their unconscious for how much energy they can tolerate. When the stress threshold is reached, the energy will be released in an overreaction or as illness.

Emotion Dive Tool

To break this routine, do this combination of the Aware-Ask-Care steps called the Emotion Dive:

- Notice when someone or something generates a reaction in your body.
- The mind may label the feeling as anger or irritation. Drop the focus on that label and any reason for the reaction.
- Focus on the body sensations of the emotion for 90 seconds, allowing the energy to move through the body.
- Ask yourself, "Do I have more to feel?"
- Care for the nervous system. Don't move to this step until after 90 seconds of diving.

The mind will want to play back the incident and retrigger the reaction, so it will take a conscious choice to stop the routine, and you may need to repeat the emotion dive tool until it's clear.

Got deadlines?

Stress can rise when a lot of tasks need to be completed in a particular timeframe. The mind may generate thoughts of worry such as "This is too much", "I'll never get this all done." When you focus on those thoughts, you stop your productivity, you increase your stress, and the mind may create a worry routine whenever there are deadlines. To prevent a worry routine:

- 1) Generate a list of all that MUST be done.
- 2) Prioritize the list, choose the top task, and forget the rest

3) Focus awareness fully on the ONE task

This may seem easy, but it takes concentration. The unconscious mind is trying to protect you by flooding you with overwhelm especially when there are multiple tasks to complete.

A negative hook and routine the mind deploys often is resistance, which can generate stress. For example, if there is a particular task you don't like to do, a routine of resistance starts where the body reacts with tension, constriction and the mind goes into complaining thinking. [The Sedona Method](#) offers a simple question to ask yourself once you are *aware* of resistance:

"Can I allow what is to be and be and be?"

Again, the invitation is to answer "yes". As the course instructs, the act of noticing resistance can be enough to release it dissipating any stress along with it.

Recap

We started by understanding the biological implications of a stress response and how over time it affects our sleep, aging, heart and immune systems. We looked at the stress routines of desire, suppression, worry, and resistance and learned the three step approach of Aware, Ask and Care. For desire we ask ourselves to let go of needing the pleasure of stress. I challenged you to become aware of suppression and doing the emotion dive to process out the uncomfortable feelings of anger, fear, and sadness. If deadlines trigger worry or complaining, I talked about the power of one focus, and if we allow what is to be, we release resistance.

Finally, to help regulate the nervous system, I explained you can stimulate the Vagus nerve by running cold water over your wrists or apply an ice pack to the back of your neck, and I dropped a link to the Physiological Sigh.

Stress is not the problem, unconscious routines are.

To find out more about how the mind might be limiting your full potential for performance and joy, [click here](#) for a free chat with me.