**Stress Buster!**

***We cannot control what happens to us in life, but we can change the way we react***

Stress happens because we are allowing fear, anger, disappointment and a host of other negative emotions to navigate our actions. By becoming aware of these emotions and allowing them to simply be, we can begin to gain control of how we react and respond to stressful situations.

Our experience is always changing. Without awareness, mental patterns related to what we fear and what upsets us make life harder.

S.T.O.P is a powerful, yet surprisingly basic strategy that helps you to be focused, alert, relaxed and at your emotional best when stressful moments present themselves in your life.

Simply put, it’s a four-step checklist to use anytime you want to ground yourself and get some insight into whatever is going on. The whole idea behind it is that by taking a very brief break—even less than one minute—you can determine the very best action to take in the moment.

**S = Stop**

Stop what you are doing: Press the pause button on your thoughts and actions.

**T = Take**

Take a few deep breaths to centre yourself and bring yourself fully into the present moment.

**O = Observe**

Observe what is going on with your:

1. **Body**  
   What physical sensations are you aware of (touch, sight, hearing, taste, smell)?

**Emotions**  
What are you feeling right now?

1. **Mind**  
   What assumptions are your making about your feelings? What is the story you’re telling yourself about why you are having them?

**P = Proceed**

Proceed with whatever you were doing, making a conscious, intentional choice to incorporate what you just learned.

**Values**This exercise is designed to help you reach a better understanding of your most significant values.

**Step 1: What I Value Most...**From this list of values (both work and personal), select the ten that are most important to you - as guides for how to behave, or as components of a valued way of life. Feel free to add any values of your own to this list.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Achievement  Advancement and promotion  Adventure  Affection (love and caring)  Arts  Challenging problems  Change and variety  Close relationships  Community  Competence  Competition  Cooperation  Country  Creativity  Decisiveness  Democracy  Ecological awareness  Economic security  Effectiveness  Efficiency  Ethical practice  Excellence  Excitement  Fame  Fast living  Financial gain  Freedom | Friendships  Growth  Having a family  Helping other people  Helping society  Honesty  Independence  Influencing others  Inner harmony  Integrity  Intellectual status  Involvement  Job tranquility  Knowledge  Leadership  Location  Loyalty  Market position  Meaningful work  Merit  Money  Nature  Being around people who are open and honest  Order (tranquility, stability, conformity)  Personal development | Physical challenge  Pleasure  Power and authority  Privacy  Public service  Purity  Quality of what I take part in  Quality relationships  Recognition (respect from others, status)  Religion  Reputation  Responsibility and accountability  Security  Self-Respect  Serenity  Sophistication  Stability  Status  Supervising others  Time freedom  Truth  Wealth  Wisdom  Work under pressure  Work with others  Working alone |

**Step 2: Elimination**

Now that you have identified ten, imagine that you are only permitted to have five values. Which five would you give up? Cross them off. Put them into order, the one that is most important to you first. Write it somewhere and refer to it when you can’t make a decision, align yourself with what makes you feel good.

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**Step 3: Support yourself**

Write it somewhere and refer to it when you can’t make a decision, align yourself with what makes you feel good.

**10 tips to improve your wellbeing**

Yes, you will have to get off the couch and you might need to say no to burgers for lunch every day but we promise we won’t turn you into lycra wearing vegans with prescriptions to Goop!

Small changes every day can make a huge difference.

1. **Put on your wake up grin**  - Smile and think happy thoughts – that first 90 secs has a big impact on your day. If you start the day with bad thoughts, then it compounds – simply turn up the corners of your mouth you’ll start to release endorphins and serotonin, your feel-good hormones.
2. **Drink lemon and warm water first thing** – and keep drinking water all day. It will cleanse your liver, you will eat less, you’ll feel better and have a clearer head.
3. **Exercise** – it boosts the happy chemicals in your brain. So **Be Active** - get your heart rate going and stretch those muscles. At the very least take the stairs. To get your endorphins surging you’ll need to really heavy breathe – so walk up those stairs faster, do your house work quicker – get that heart pumping.
4. **Eat a banana** – Did you ever see a depressed chimp? Bananas help to lessen feelings of stress and anxiety due to high levels of tryptophan which converts to serotonin – one of those happy hormone. The high level of potassium helps you to be more alert and will give you energy.
5. **Put on your WOW! Glasses –** Go outside and **Take Notice** – The wind, the warmth, the cold, the trees, the blossom, the amazing sky, the moon. The world is full of things that make you go **WOW**, if you just slow down and **Take Notice.** Even better, go with a friend and **Connect** as well.
6. **5 fruit and veg per day –** Get the fibre into to you… Without it you clog up, if you clog up you get grumpy and sluggish, if you get grumpy and sluggish – let’s not go there! If you have trouble fitting the veges in, put them into a smoothie.
7. **Play music** – it cheers you up. Create a playlist for when you need a pick-me-up. Play it in the car to and from work, doing your housework or when you’re going for that brisk walk, getting out of breath and send even more happy hormones to your brain. (No, not the sad break-up playlist!)
8. **Remove a poison** – Take away something that you know is bad for you – fast food, sugar, gluten – even for a couple of days a week – replace it with something healthy like water, fruit, veg, quinoa, exercise whatever works for you.
9. **Kill em with kindness** – When you’re feeling bad, do something nice for someone else and it will make their day and you’ll feel even better.In fact, **Give** every day.
10. **Keep the cogs turning** – Use it or lose it as they say – use your brain. **Keep learning** – something new every day.