

ARTI TUTEJA

STRESS & THE URBAN SOUL

An Essential Guide to Managing Stress in a Busy World





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WHO IS THIS EBOOK FOR?

If you find yourself in the clutches of fast-paced city life, where a stressful day is almost the norm, this eBook is for you.

If you find yourself staring at the brake lights in front of you, your mind consumed by problems, some on-hand, some impending, some even imaginary, this eBook is for you. If you ever rise above the hum of day-to-day life and wonder how much more you could be and how much more life could be if only everything ‘decompressed’ a little, this eBook is for you. If you often find yourself unable to really be there for the people and the times that count, because your mind is weighed down by stress, this eBook is for you.

Alternatively, if you find yourself surrounded by family, friends, and colleagues that are far from their one-hundred-percent selves, because of the crushing weight of stress in their lives, this eBook is for you some insight, a way of understanding, and perhaps even a tool for you to help them.

This eBook is for anyone looking for a conscious and subconscious way to understand, manage, reframe and conquer stress.

I'M STRESSED, YOU'RE STRESSED, WE'RE ALL STRESSED: AN INTRODUCTION

“There is more to life than increasing its speed.” – Mahatma Gandhi



A simple idea that we forget. We get caught up in the turning wheels, the churning cogs. But how do we learn to slow down?

Let's take a look at the demands we deal with every day: Make it to work on time, make it back home on time, fix dinner on time, get the kids to bed on time, get your promotion in time to save a hefty college fund in time, accomplish enough and make enough money to retire in time.

All part of a plan that is our own making. It is only natural then, isn't it, that we use speed as a means to get ahead in this constant race against time? As a means to feel more in control? It is us that picks this speed, but ironically, one side effect of this acceleration is constant, pressing stress. Stress resulting from a lack of control. That is, however, just the nature of speed. To some degree, it takes away control.

Add to that persistent, pounding run through life all our other stressors: bad days at work, the toxicity, and pain that comes with a derailing relationship, change, anxiety and feelings of inadequacy, and before you know it, you're snowballing downhill and the problems just keep getting bigger and heavier. Cue: More stress. But that's not the end of it.

Although it might not seem like it, this self-induced stress is more within our control than we imagine. What it takes is a closer understanding of what stress means to each of us, where it stems from and a fresh perspective on how to approach it.

Over the course of this eBook, you will find how skills like learning to prioritize, learning to let go, and reframing situations and circumstances can help you manage day-to-day stress.

While some of these techniques are takeaway techniques that you can apply and utilize on your own, others are practiced by therapists and experts to help understand and manage your stress.

We welcome you to reach out to our team at Potential Unlimited with any questions you may have or that may surface as you go through this eBook.



? STRESS/ ANXIETY



WHAT IS STRESS?

We understand stress as the feeling of overload that sets in when we can't meet the demands that we are confronted with. It's an overwhelming struggle to meet with expectations relating to finances, family, relationships, work and other aspects of our lives.

What is key to understand, though, is that primarily, stress is natural. It is our physical and psychological response to change, our defense against danger. Stress triggers the release of a complex mix of hormones and chemicals that put our bodies in what is called 'fight or flight mode' – you either tackle the danger head-on, or you run from it. This is called a stress response.

Now, this fight or flight mode is basically chalked down to survival instinct. It's imperative, and it is what caused our cavemen ancestors to survive in the face of nature's many stressors. For instance, a caveman's fight-or-flight instinct would kick in to give him the strength to fight a hungry wildcat or the surge of energy needed to run from it. Even though as our lives are so different, whenever there is even a perception of danger, our body will demonstrate state response.

Stress also causes the adrenaline rush that most of us have felt at some point in our lives – the butterflies in your stomach before a first date, your thumping heart before you're about to stand up to address an audience, the excitement coursing through you before you get on a rollercoaster. In each of these scenarios, stress triggers a set of physical symptoms, and truth said, the resulting feelings are indicators of excitement without which life would, perhaps, be dull.

DEBUNKING BELIEFS: STRESS IS A 'BAD THING'



Quite to the contrary, stress is actually a good thing. In moderation, stress serves as a motivator. Your body and its workings are not your enemies but a way for us to relate to it, and to our environment.

The problem, however, arises when the state of stress persists for extended periods of time – when your body never has the chance to relax and recompose after fight-or-flight mode, or if the onset of stress is too frequent real or perceived.

In a state of chronic stress, the very same physical and psychological reactions that are beneficial to us become detrimental.

In fight-or-flight mode, blood flow to the brain is constricted as a result of vasoconstriction, which over time leads our thought processes to get muddled. Have you ever experienced the feeling of not being able to ‘think straight’ in the face of a problem, for instance?

In fight-or-flight mode, our cortisol levels are also fairly high. High cortisol levels lead to an increase in blood sugar levels and blood pressure, causing our health to suffer in the long run, too. Imagining the impact of this, in the long run, all of those claims about stress being a killer barely seem unfounded. Adrenaline or epinephrine levels also shoot up, pushing your pulse rate and blood pressure up.

THE TWO MAJOR SOURCES OF STRESS

Each of us has our own individual set of stressors, so attempting to create compartmentalized categories for stress proves difficult. Most of our stressors, can however, broadly be attributed to two major sources:



In the face of difficult situations, events and occurrences like separation, dealing with death, the lack of financial stability, loss of a job and other such life-altering changes triggers the physical and psychological symptoms of stress.

This type of stress could use a few different approaches including changing your approach to a problem (reframing), learning to come to terms with something, or overcoming it.

There is a large external element connected to this form of stress, and it may not always be in your hands to change the situation, or remove yourself from it. This could, however, be time-bound or temporary stress as we usually bounce back to normalcy when the situation changes itself.

(however this could be time bound stress as we bounce back to normalcy as the situation changes itself)



2. STRESS ATTRIBUTED TO THE LACK OF LIFE SKILLS

When we find ourselves either in a constant or frequently occurring state of stress without any of these major events having affected us, this stress is often attributed to the lack of skills.

For instance, feeling stressed out in the traffic jam every morning could be due to your own lack of punctuality, feeling like you need more hours in the day could mean that you are not able to prioritize or manage time well.

Identifying and realizing the causes for this type of stress, and addressing the problem strategically can help to eliminate or reduce it drastically.

A good way to approach this is to ask yourself “What areas of my life am I struggling with?”. This will also help you identify what and how you can help yourself out of these struggles.

This is manageable stress – you can sharpen your skills to handle it better, or choose to eliminate the stressor in some cases. A large part of ‘getting a grip’ over your day-to-day stress lies in the handling of this kind of stress.

DO I SUFFER FROM STRESS OR ANXIETY?

A man in a dark suit and tie stands with his arms crossed, looking out of a large window. The window shows a blurred cityscape with tall buildings. The image has orange overlays: a large rectangle on the left containing the title, and a horizontal bar across the middle.

Stress and anxiety are often confused, and knowing the difference between the two is often a key step in addressing your stressors and managing them.

Stress is a physiological response to an external cause - a deadline at work, a difficult relationship, the health problems being faced by a loved one, or in some cases, a state of mind resulting from the lack of life skills. Stress goes away after the stressor is removed, or managed.

Anxiety, however, is essentially fear of the unknown - it is the persistent feeling that something bad is going to happen, and it's origin is internal.

Stress and anxiety are so closely interlinked because chronic stress can trigger anxiety, and prolonged anxiety can lead to chronic stress. Outwardly, the two can persist with very similar symptoms and differentiating one from the other is something that requires understanding the root of a problem, or where the stress or anxiety first began.



OOPS!

OUR BIGGEST MISTAKE WITH STRESS

Our biggest mistake with stress lies not in the ways that we handle it, but in the ways that we disregard it as a problem. How often do you find yourself at either the giving or receiving end of statements like this?

- ✓ I just have a million things going on right now
- ✓ Things are always crazy around here
- ✓ I've just got a lot of nervous energy
- ✓ I often work 80-hour work weeks, but that's just the job

These are all statements that cause you to internalize the wrong message: that stress is normal, and a constantly stressful life is just the way things are.

The detriment of this is that it makes stress a silent killer. The chronic stress that persists and affects us everyday becomes something we get used to. In fact, to take things a little further, some of us even find ourselves proud of our packed calendars, busy social lives and our many, varied simultaneous pursuits.

While the variety and the buzz of forward movement is always exciting, it creates the perfect grounds for the seeds of chronic stress to settle and grow.

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Let's explore a few different ways to handle your stressors.

HANDLE YOUR STRESSORS

“It's not the load that breaks you down, it's the way you carry it” – Lou Holtz



Because everyone's stressors vary, everyone's approach to handling them varies too. Handling stress is a mindset, and every situation and individual might require a different approach. In this chapter, we have highlighted a few basic ways for you to approach either eliminating your stressors, or just rethinking what they really mean to you.

ADDRESS YOUR WEAKNESSES: THE LIFE SKILLS APPROACH

Earlier on, we discussed stress stemming from one of two major sources, one of them being being self-induced stress that can often be addressed by learning and adapting to new life skills.

Some essential life skills are focus & self-control, time management, prioritization, critical thinking, clarity on values and beliefs, assertive communication and decision-making skills.



To do this successfully towards stress management, it is important to slow down and analyze exactly what is causing you to feel stressed out. Is it, for instance, your busy calendar that's keeping you away from your home and family? In such case, time management and prioritization might prove useful areas for you to focus on.

Is it your unhappiness with your job? Perhaps revisiting your values, or undergoing a business coaching exercise to help identify your purpose might help you to realize where your dissatisfaction is coming from. An unhappy work environment, or one that causes you stress can have a much larger negative impact on life than just the 8 or 9 hours a day you spend at the office.

Perhaps your stressor is your relationship with your spouse. In this case, reflecting (together and alone) on what was going wrong, communicating more clearly and finding ground for compromise might help. Once again – compassion, communication and cooperation are all life skills that you can focus on developing either through some strategic self-learning, or with the help of a therapist or a coach.

It is important to look inwards here: Is it your own negative self-talk or your limiting beliefs that are causing you stress and keeping you away from health and happiness?

Food for Thought: Consider Tony Robbins' 6 Basic Needs That Make Us Tick. Which of these needs is at the top of your priority list?

CHANGING YOUR DYNAMIC WITH STRESS



Stress is relative, dynamic, ever-changing and a large part of its nature and character comes from within you. While a stressor might be entirely external, and you have no control over it, the way you perceive the stressors and approach it is completely within your control.

Changing your dynamic with stress is a great way to learn to manage stress better. This TEDTalk is a great starting point for you to start thinking about stress differently.

You can accept a stressor for the way it is and work around it, you can attempt to change it strategically, or in many cases you might even just need to loosen your grip over a situation and let go in order to release the stress attached to it. Here's a little lesson from a philosophy professor:

A philosophy professor walks into a classroom and picks up a glass full of water from the table. The students sit back and started to go over their smart, ready replies to the glass-half-full-half-empty question.

But instead, the professor asks, “How heavy do you think this glass is?” The class, a little puzzled, guessed, “8 ounces, maybe 12 ounces...”

“Perhaps. But in an hour from now, this very same glass of water is going to feel a lot heavier. And in 3 hours from now, my arm will probably go numb from fatigue, and a few hours after that even, I won’t even be able to hold the glass up any longer. That’s how heavy it would feel.”

That’s exactly what stress and worry are like. Short-term stress, a quick thought about a problem, probably causes you to work towards a solution. The longer the worries stew in your head though, the more they weigh you down, and eventually your stress incapacitates you

.

Changing the way that you approach stress includes a few different ways to think about the problem, the possible outcomes and the choices you make in response to the problem. Sometimes, putting the glass down, letting go, is the right choice to make.

Stress often roots from a deep sense of lack of control. Taking control of your lifestyle habits, building positive relationships, identifying what makes life fulfilling for you and working towards it all help to steer clear of unmanageable stress. Help Guide, in collaboration with Harvard Medical School, shares some valuable [self-help techniques for stress management.](#)





A DEEPER PROGRAMMING

For many individuals, however, self-help is often only one part of the approach. Often times, people suffering from chronic stress are not able to extract themselves from their stressful lives for long enough to consciously implement these self-help techniques. At times like that, a deeper programming at the subconscious level can help unlock thoughts and actions that are otherwise difficult to bring about. That, reader, is where Hypnotherapy comes in.



WHAT IS HYPNOTHERAPY?

Hypnotherapy is a form of alternative therapy used to reprogram behavioral, physical, and psychological conditions. It harnesses the power of the highly suggestible subconscious mind through hypnotic reframing and suggestions. Hypnosis is the act of guiding someone into a trance state.

Hypnotherapy involves using hypnosis as a tool in order to achieve healing, discovery or to bring about behavioral or cognitive change.

Contrary to common belief, and to the media-constructed image of hypnosis, the person, when hypnotized has complete control and awareness of their actions and thoughts. When hypnotized, you can hear and comprehend everything that is happening around you. You actually participate in a hypnotherapy session even in the trance state – it's not something that 'happens' to you while you are asleep. The hypnotic trance is merely a time when our minds are more open or susceptible to suggestion.

Hypnotherapists use that mode of acceptance to help program positive messages into our subconscious, messages that can bring about change in behavior such as letting go of an addiction, allow your subconscious mind to reframe grief, stress and problems so you are able to approach them differently, eliminate phobias and fears, anxiety and more.

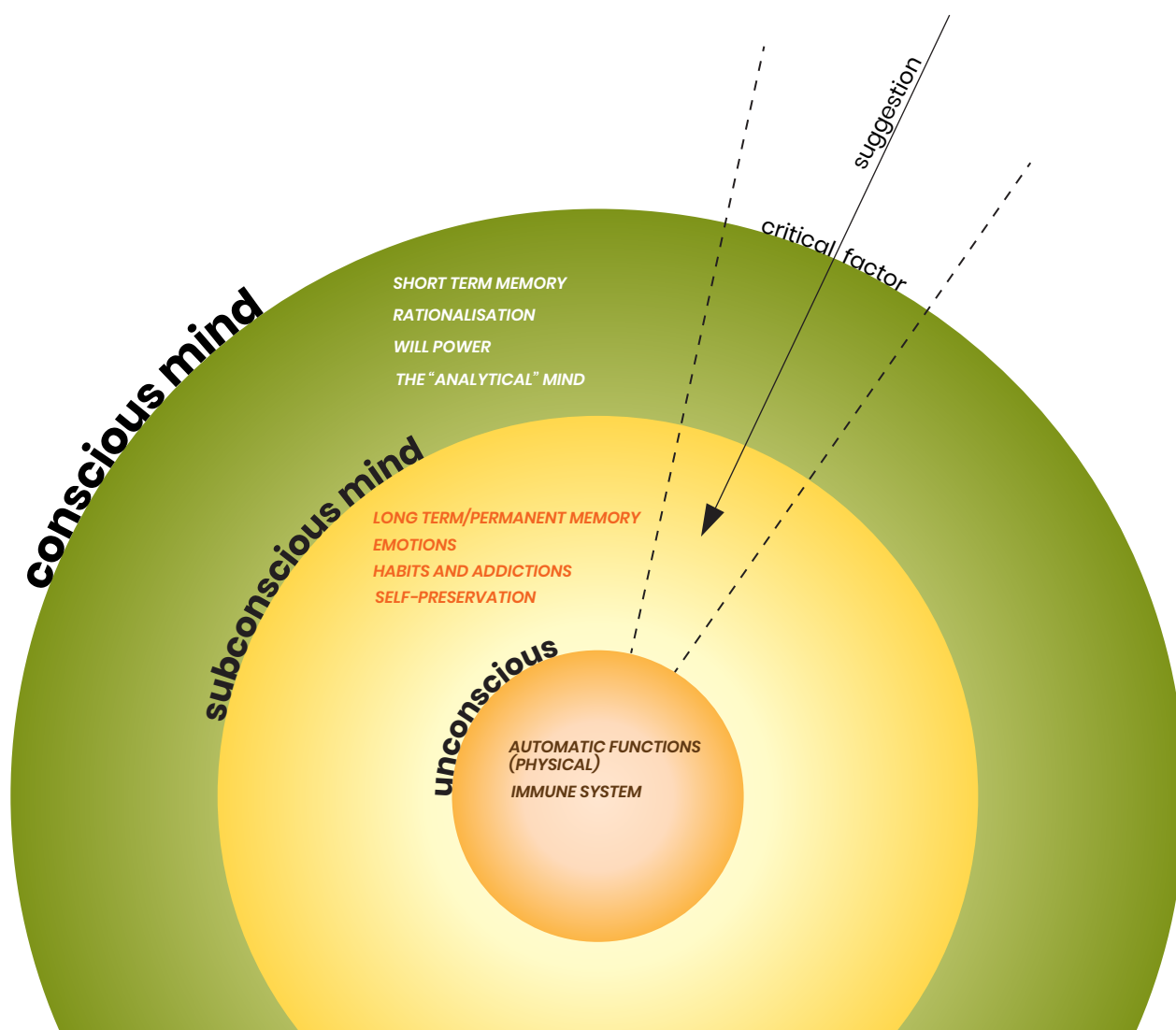
Hypnotherapists use a few different approaches to make this happen. Some of the tools and techniques used are takeaway tools that you can apply yourself, while others require a more structured approach with a certified professional.

Before we get into some of these tools and techniques, let's gather a broad understanding of how and why hypnotherapy works.



HOW & WHY HYPNOTHERY WORKS?

GETTING INSIDE YOUR HEAD



The critical factor lies within our conscious mind. For the sake of simplicity, let's go over this in non-biological terms. Your mind is essentially a microprocessor, with three layers of internal processes – the conscious, the subconscious and the unconscious.

The conscious mind is where you function from in day-to-day life. This is where you rationalize, make decisions from, analyze problems and situations, and this is where you find your willpower to do or not to do something. This is also where you store short-term memory.

The other significant part of your mind that has a strong influence on your thoughts, actions and behaviors is your subconscious mind. It is difficult to trigger a change in the subconscious mind. This powerful layer houses information committed to your long-term memory, your emotions, your habits and addictions and your sense of self-preservation. This is where our human instinct lies.

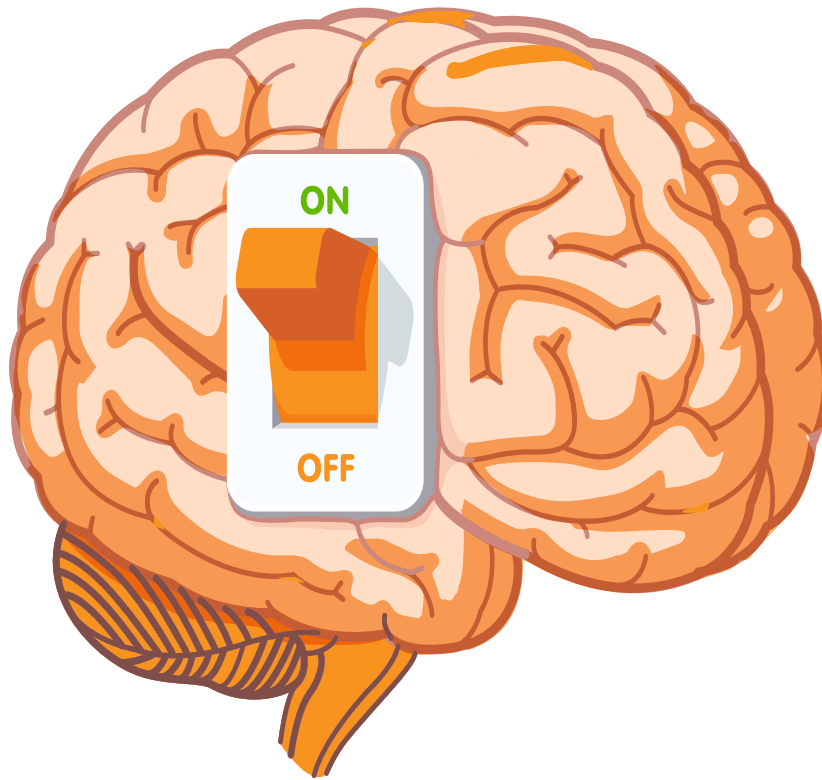
Within that lies your unconscious mind. This is where the automatic processes and functions of your body are processed – your physical functions, your immune system, and other bodily functions.

In a hypnotherapy session, your therapist bypasses your Critical Factor in order to reach into your subconscious mind to bring about lasting change, that runs deeper than the conscious surface.



STRESS & OUR REPTILIAN MINDS

SELF-PRESERVATION MODE



Our innate and self-preserving behavioral patterns come from our reptilian or primal minds. Our stressors can awaken this part of our brains, and force us into self-preservation or defense mode. When this happens, your reptilian response to the stressor is often to fight or flight.

Have you ever walked away from a situation and wondered why it had gotten you feeling so bothered? The racing heart, the shallow breathing, the quick anger response is often your mind going into self-preservation mode from a threat. For cavemen, the threat was more directly life-threatening (like the wildcat), but today, our modern stressors might be much less serious and still trigger the same self-preserving response.

Controlling this response, coming back to calm and addressing your stressor with more reason and logic can form an important part of a hypnotherapist's approach to helping you manage stress.



MANAGING STRESS WITH HYPNOTHERAPY: TOOLS & TECHNIQUES

UNDERSTANDING YOUR VIEW OF THE WORLD: META-MODEL QUESTIONS

A typical session with us begins with the use of meta-model questions. Meta-model questions are a set of questions that help therapists clear the fog around the problems you are seeking help for.

With the use of carefully constructed questions, clients often find that they had a limited view of a situation, or were deleting or distorting key information pertaining to it. Understanding the gaps in your view of the world is a powerful approach to understanding your stressor, and taking away from it the power you believe it has over you. This is often achieved through a subconscious process called 'Regression to Cause'.

Emotional problems often have root-causes that go back to our childhood. With the regression to cause technique, hypnotherapists go to the root of the problem: back to where it all started. Hypnotherapists change the emotional state by changing the belief itself, and by reprogramming the mind from a stressful state to a relaxed one.

For instance, let's take a look at this exchange between myself and a client:

Client: He “always” stresses me out (referring to the husband)

Hypnotherapist: “Are there times when you feel relaxed around him”

Client: Yes.

Hypnotherapist: What are those times?

Client: When we talk to each other without any expectations.



This is how you can derive that “always” feeling stressed out by her husband was simply a belief and not a fact that affected the client’s everyday life. It gives a different perspective to the client. This awareness itself is half the problem solved. The other half is to develop life skills (on both people’s parts) in order to manage relationships well and approach them with positive states of mind.

ALTERING YOUR WORLDVIEW: REFRAMING



Reframing is a powerful technique that you can train your mind to use even without the help of a therapist or practitioner. In hypnotherapy, reframing is often used to help you put your stressor in a different context, or to give it new meaning. Both techniques help you to essentially view your stressor(s) in a different light than you do now.

For instance, if the stressor is negative self-talk then learning to make it positive with simple daily suggestions like ‘I am good enough’, can sometimes work wonders.

Or let’s say the stressor is a current boss at the office. Considering the fact that you want to get better at managing your boss, reframe your mind to flip the dynamic: get yourself to think that you are the boss and you’re managing a grown-up ‘kid’, when you’re dealing with your boss. That can go a long way in managing the dynamic without losing your cool.



Anchoring is a technique by which your therapist programs certain stimuli within you and associates them with emotional and psychological responses.

Creating anchors does, however, work better if you are in a therapeutic setting. But if you want to do it for yourself, here is an approach you can use:

- ✓ *Close your eyes and imagine a color that calms you*
- ✓ *Give that calm a shape or make it big or small*
- ✓ *Find the stress you feel in the body (generally mind or heart)*
- ✓ *Replace that feeling of stress with the calming color, and*
- ✓ *Repeat this suggestion to yourself: Whenever I see this color I feel calmer.*

You can anchor yourself to anything that calms you: color, water, breath or a plant or tree in your garden, even.

TAPPING YOUR STRESS AWAY: EMOTIONAL FREEDOM TECHNIQUE



Tapping is a concept that originates from traditional Chinese medicine. It is a powerful technique that involves using your fingers to tap 14 meridian points around the face and on your body. Tapping these meridian points restores balance in the body.

From professional athletes to artists to the businessman that's about to step into an important presentation, tapping has proven an extremely useful technique to immediately dissolve stress and anxiety.

Here is a simple technique that you can start using straight away when anxiety or stress seems to take the better of you:

[STRESS MANAGEMENT THROUGH EFT](#) (<< *CLICK HERE*)

TRAINING, DEVELOPING AND EMPOWERING

“The easier you make it inside your head, the easier it will make things outside your head”

- **Richard Bandler, Co-creator of Neuro-Linguistic Programming**

Truer words could not be spoken. Whether it is stress, anxiety, a worrisome relationship, or grief, coming to terms with it from inside your head is the most effective way to ease your mind.

All the techniques that we have touched upon in this eBook, whether practiced alone or with the help of a coach or a therapist, are all geared towards making sense of that inner chaos – to re-align your inner dialogue so you are able to approach your stressor with more structure and sensibility.

Our mantra at Potential Unlimited is **‘Training, Developing and Empowering’**. That is the order in which the strongest minds master their biggest challenges.

With the right guidance and training, by developing true insight into your stressors and their underlying causes, and by steadily breaking down those mental barriers, you can empower yourself to become the best version of you.

The next time you are faced with a stressful situation, take a moment to retreat back inside your head. Make it easier there, at the root of it all. The rest will follow.

To learn more about leading a stress-free, empowered life, get in touch with us. We work with business owners, high-income executive and even students, to help them do more and be more

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Arti is the founder of Potential Unlimited Training, a personal and professional development counselling center based in Dubai, UAE. Her combined experience of corporate human resources and consulting have allowed her to transform her clients' lives on many fronts – work, relationships, health and more.

On the human resources front, Arti's specialization lies in Human Behavior (DISC) profiling, job analysis, competency development and performance management.

Over her 20 years of experience, Arti has been instrumental in independently setting up HR processes and functions for some one of India's companies, and has worked on key recruitment projects with Philips Consulting Limited in Nigeria.

Prior to setting up Potential Unlimited, Arti was an associate with The Change Associates, a counseling and coaching company based in Dubai. Here she spent over three years dealing with client issues ranging across anxiety, grief, panic attacks, bingeing, fear, self-confidence, study improvement, smoking, weight management and more.

Today, Arti thoroughly enjoys working with a diverse clientele of both individual clients battling some of these issues, as well as organizations and teams that are looking to identify performance and mindset issues, and create more positive work environments.

Arti delivers lectures, Certified Training Programs and workshops, and works with clients in UAE, India.



To Know more about her services, visit

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www.potentialunlimitedtraining.com