

Stress Management Workbook 1

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Key Points

1. Three Global Crises

- COVID-19 pandemic and aftermath
- Global economic crisis
- The “crisis of stress” impacting mental and physical health

2. Stress Is a Killer

- ~110 million deaths/year linked to stress
- Stress claims roughly **7 people every 2 seconds**

3. Definition of Stress

A state of mental or emotional strain resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances.

4. Fight-or-Flight Response

- **Trigger:** Perceived threat (e.g., saber-tooth tiger)
- **Brain Reaction:** Releases **cortisol** → raises blood glucose, sharpens alertness, accelerates heart rate, dilates pupils
- **Physiological Changes:** Faster breathing, higher blood pressure, muscle tremors—optimized for immediate survival

5. Human Vulnerability

- Animals quickly revert after threat passes
- Humans often remain in elevated cortisol (stress) long after the danger is gone

Exercises

Exercise 1: Identify Your Stress Words

- **Task:** Write down **3 words** that best describe how you know you're stressed (e.g., "tense," "irritable," "exhausted").

- **Tip:** Keep this list visible for the next video to track changes.

Exercise 2: Rate Your Position on the Stress Scale

- **Task:** On a 1–5 scale (1 = very relaxed, 5 = extremely stressed), mark where you fall right now.

- **Prompt:** Recall the previous survey's results—aim to shift toward 1–2 over this course.

Activities

Activity 1: Fight-or-Flight Storytelling

- **Watch:** A short nature clip or news story that triggers mild stress (e.g., a suspenseful movie trailer).
- **Reflect:** Note your physical reactions (heart rate, breathing, muscle tension).

Notes

- **Discuss:** Share with a partner what you felt and map it to cortisol-driven changes.

Activity 2: Stress Response Journal

- **Duration:** 3 days
- **Track:**

1. A **stressful event** you experienced
2. Your **immediate physical reactions**
3. How long you remained “on edge” afterward

	Stress event	Reaction	Duration of
1			
2			
3			

- **Goal:** Increase awareness of how long your body stays in fight-or-flight.

Reflections

What non-life-threatening situations trigger your fight-or-flight?

1. **Triggers**

2. **Impact:** How does prolonged cortisol release affect your daily life (sleep, concentration, mood)?

3. **Switch-Off:** When was the last time you naturally returned to calm? What helped?

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Action Plan

1. **Create Awareness:** Set a phone reminder three times daily—pause and note any signs of stress.
2. **Record Reactions:** Use your stress-response journal to become familiar with your fight-or-flight cues.
3. **Prepare for Video 2:** Keep your “3 stress words” and stress-scale rating ready for the next session.

Final Summary

Stress is an ancient survival mechanism—fight or flight—driven by cortisol. While lifesaving in emergencies, modern humans often stay in this heightened state long after the threat has passed, harming health and well-being. By recognizing our personal stress triggers and physiological responses, we lay the groundwork for learning how to switch off our stress response and restore balance.

Good luck, and keep practicing !

Inspiring Quote “Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response.” — Viktor E. Frankl