



# mizone

## The ABC of Stress Management

### AWARENESS, BREATHING, CHOOSING

#### **Calm, Contented, Connected.**

*Feeling stressed?* Don't worry, you are not alone... we all deal with stressful situations on a daily basis, but it is a very individual thing. Work creates anxiety in some, whereas relationships and social situations may be a problem for others.

Whether it's through work — meetings, deadlines — relationships, finance; worries about past, present or future, health issues or emotional issues; stress is bad for your health; we all know that, it affects, the heart, blood pressure, causes headaches, etc.

What we don't often reflect on is how stress **CHANGES WHO YOU ARE**. Here's the scary part: make a mental picture of the calm you, and then the stressed you; which one would you rather be with?

Think about that for a moment; when you are calm, well fed and watered, no worries, what are you like? — as a partner, a parent, a son or daughter, a colleague, a friend? Your relationships go smoothly, you make clear decisions, life is good!

I know that when I am feeling stressed I find it difficult to connect with the happy chatter of my children — they notice very quickly that I am not tuned in to them — they tend to get busy and remove themselves from my company or they are quick to say “mum, don't get stressed!” Luckily I have built up an awareness to my stress levels and have the added bonus of aware children, so I regain my calm, contented, connected-self quickly, not allowing stress to build up.

Needless to say that when you are stressed, your tone of voice can be dismissive, friends are neglected due to pressures, fun is not top of the list, and your patience is short. All your human interactions are affected, whether at home, work, driving or just out shopping; life can become more difficult, creating more stress.

What's more... for some people, stress is worn as a badge of honour, it's a way of life or it just becomes a habit — you might say: “I don't have time to deal with my stress! Or I'm an A-type personality, I'm just driven.”

But when you reflect on how it is impacting your life you can see that it is worth the time to improve every aspect of your life — NOW.

#### **You Choose**

Make a decision to become calmer, more peaceful; not to lose your drive or energy, but to thread moments of peace and calm into your day, so activity is interspersed with quiet moments. These moments do not have to be full-on meditation, (although that would be extremely effective); they can be moments of reflection on what is good in your life, what is working and what can easily be improved.

We escape from ourselves with alcohol, food, cigarettes, internet games, t.v. — we don't even want to be with ourselves!

Get back to the happier you, so your friends and family want to spend more time with you — and you'll enjoy spending time alone too!

#### **Awareness**

The first step in managing stress and leading a more peaceful, contented life, is **AWARENESS**. Noticing any areas of tension in the body, a stiffness around the shoulder blades, grinding your teeth, back ache. Or perhaps focusing on your internal dialogue — are your thoughts becoming negative?

With this moment of awareness it may be enough to just eat or drink something — it is stressful to the body and mind to feel hunger or thirst, so it is vital to feed and hydrate the body regularly.

The best way to relieve tensions in the body and mind is through the breath. So **BREATHING**, taking slow rhythmic breaths will oxygenate your body, thus clearing the mind and allowing you time to focus on what you want to do.

#### **Choosing**

This is the next step: **CHOOSING** — calm, clear and creative choices.

You can choose to take a walk, even if it is just to the water dispenser, or you may choose

to eat something — bananas, blueberries, and broccoli are stress-busting superfoods.

You may be in a position to take some exercise, this will release feel-good endorphins, release tension and refocus the mind.

Or take time out to plan a holiday, to plan fun with friends, and/or family; reflect on what is good in your life, ask yourself, what makes me smile? What makes me laugh? Focus on those things for a moment to give your brain a break from the daily grind; this will help to elevate your mood and allow you to clear your mind.

Check the sounds around you — maybe there are some disturbing noises around you, from machinery, traffic, etc. Play some calming music if possible. Play your favourite music in the car — make up a cd with your favourite feel-good tracks on it.

You can also set your mind to making some long-term choices for relieving stress. You can make a plan to include exercise in your daily routine, whether it is walking, running, some daily stretches, breathing or yoga, or to sign up for a sport. Any creative pursuit is stress relieving — try learning to play a musical instrument, take an art class, learn a new skill, or a new language, do something new, that you find enjoyable.

Are you laughing enough? Who or what makes you laugh? Plan to watch a funny movie or hook up with friends who amuse you — lighten up! It has amazing effects on your mood and general health.

### Benefits of Coaching

The stress you experience; the reasons for it and the ways to deal with it, are all unique to you — that is why having a coach to assess your habits and choices and help you make some new empowering choices, is far more effective than scratching the surface of adding a little exercise or fun in your routine. Change can create anxiety and in a changing world we need to adapt to change in a positive way.

### It's as Easy as ABC

Here's a complete A to Z of stress management techniques that may also be helpful — see what appeals and *choose* what you need.

## ABC's of STRESS MANAGEMENT

*Awareness* — as soon as you feel some tension, take a break, either mentally or physically.

*Breathing* — slow deep breathing will calm the mind and body

*Choosing* — what do you need to restore harmony in your body and mind?

*Diet/Drink* — a drink of water or a nutritious snack

*EFT* — (Emotional Freedom Technique)  
[www.emofree.com](http://www.emofree.com)

*Fun* — family, friends, frivolity.

*Gratitude* — focus on, and be grateful for what is good in your life.

*Holiday* (even planning is helpful)

*Imagine your self in a happy moment/place*

*Joy* — remembering joyful times or thinking of those things that bring you Joy.

*Kinesiology*

*Laughter*

*Meditation/Music*

*Novel experiences*

*Optimism*

*Peace*

*Quiet*

*Rest/Relaxation*

*Smile* — even a pretend smile has a positive affect on the brain

*Touch* — have a massage or a cuddle with your partner

*Uplifting* people, music, conversation.

*Visualisation*

*Water*

*Xcitement!*

*Yoga*

*Zen*