

TITLE: Using Mindfulness as a Strategy to Relieve Stress

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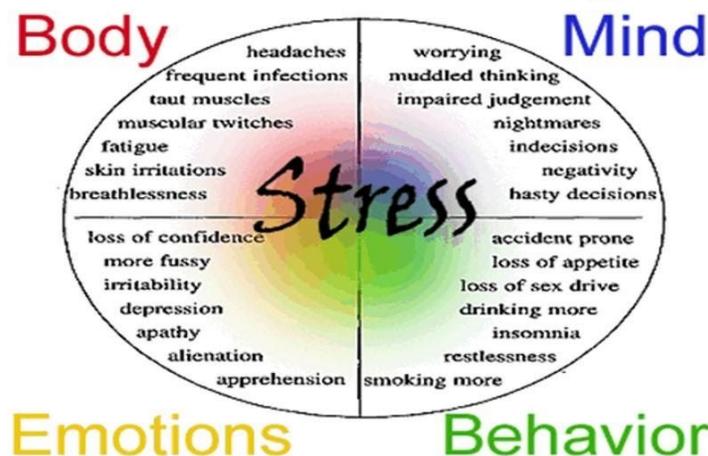
[Stress](#) is a part of our everyday lives. It is our body's way of responding to the pressure of the events or situations that we are confronted with.

Not all stress is bad. Sometimes it can help us focus and become more self-aware. It can even propel us forward in times when we need it to complete a task or meet a specific goal. Learning how to manage our day-to-day stress is an especially meaningful process for those of us looking to recover from previous painful events and get more out of our days.

Heading 1: What is Stress?

According to Psychology Today, [stress is defined as](#) "the psychological perception of pressure, and the body's response to it." Your body's response to stress involves multiple systems, from your metabolism, muscles, and memory.

PHOTO GRAPHIC 1:
"Body/Minds/Emotions/Behaviour"



Here's how it works. When your body perceives that there is danger nearby, the automatic response system, or "[fight-or-flight](#)" is activated through hormonal signals within your body. It is very same biological alert system that prepares an animal to meet a threat or to *flee* from it.

Stressful events such as running from an attacker, freezing up on a presentation, fear of getting fired or getting lost in an unfamiliar area at night, can trigger the surge of adrenaline and cortisol throughout the body. **These hormones increase the heartbeat and the circulation of blood to support quick action, mobilize fat and sugar for immediate energy, focus attention to track the danger, prepare muscles for movement, and more.**

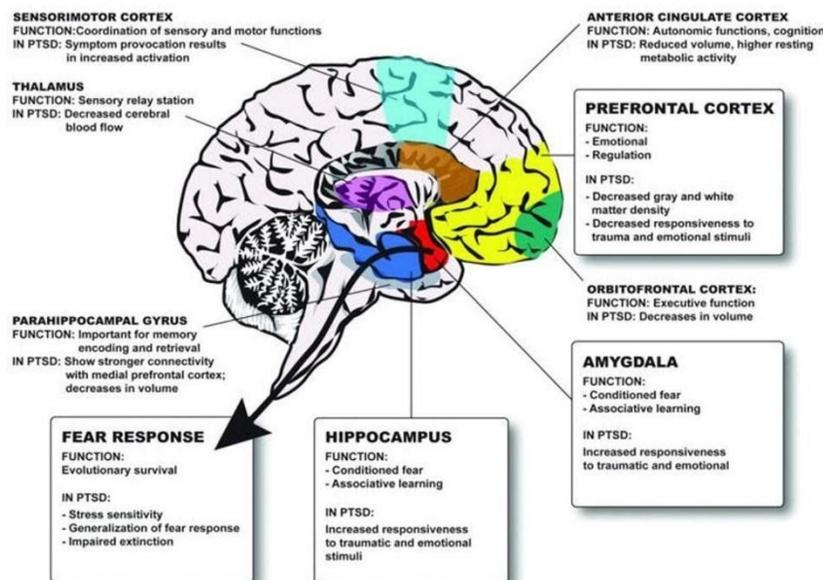
Leading QUOTE:

“The practice [of mindfulness] can help to pull us away from a busy mind and move us away from negative thoughts,” she says.
“Developing an awareness of our thoughts, routines, and habits objectively can help us to deeply examine where we can make more beneficial shifts.” – Trish Curling, Certified Yoga Teacher

Without the critical and lifesaving response caused by stress we would lack the awareness of impending danger so the body can work to protect us. It is the nervous system’s solution to our short-term, life-threatening problems. **Ultimately, it is what keeps us alive.** All living systems rely on stress to function. It is how we all encounter and respond to the challenges and uncertainties that come through mere existence.

Mind”

PHOTO GRAPHIC 2: “Stress on the



Heading 2:

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

There are different types of stress. The stress that you come across when preparing for the pivotal moments in your life – such as studying for a big exam, graduating, getting married, or buying a new home – is the good kind. Then there is the bad and even the ugly. Stress that is put to work in extended difficulties such as daily traffic jams, pressures of work, life-altering accidents, family

illnesses, or marital problems can lead to a host of problems in the long-run. Obesity, eating disorders, cardiovascular disease, skin and hair problems, and gastrointestinal issues are just a few of the consequences that can occur as a result of ongoing, [chronic stress](#).

PHOTO GRAPHIC 3:

SUMMIT MEDICAL GROUP

Sources of Stress

<u>The Good</u>	<u>The Bad</u>	<u>The Ugly</u>
Retirement	Break a leg	Nasty car accident
Get married	Spouse becomes ill	Bankruptcy
Have children	Child gets in trouble	Divorce
Buy a new home	Lose wallet	Illness
Go on vacation	In-laws coming	Loved one dying
New Job, Promotion		

Heading 3: The Practice of Mindfulness

Research has shown the [practice of mindfulness](#) to be useful in not only boosting your physical stamina, but your mental state as well. In recent years, [mindfulness meditation](#) has been used to treat a variety of mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, eating disorders, and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Trish Curling, a certified yoga teacher and founder of [Ani O Yoga](#), says that cultivating our own [sense of self-awareness](#) can do wonders in [relieving stress](#) and improving your overall well-being. “The practice [of mindfulness] can help to pull us away from a busy mind and move us away from negative thoughts,” she says. **“Developing an awareness of our thoughts, routines, and habits objectively can help us to deeply examine where we can make more beneficial shifts.”**

Though seemingly simplistic in nature, deep mediation is no different than any other well-respected practice or artform in that it requires time and effort. Don't be so hard on yourself though, if you find it challenging [sticking to a routine](#). “Developing a mindfulness practice is ongoing, therefore it's important to create opportunities where we actively work on it,” says Curling. **“We should approach this with kindness and self-compassion.** Every attempt to maintain a mindfulness approach will not be successful, but we can continuously return to our tool bag of methods that help us to cultivate this mindset.”

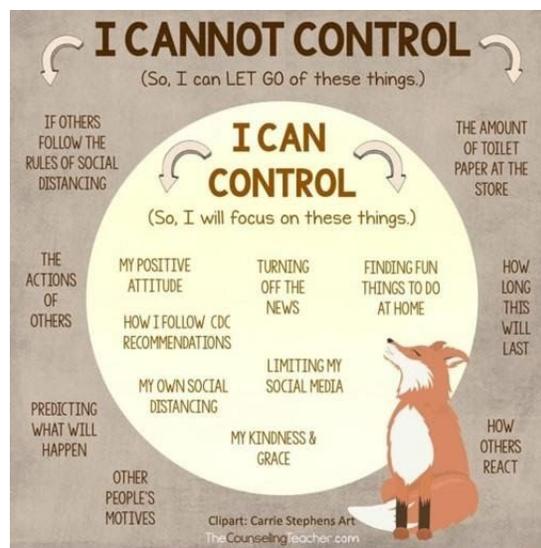
If you are committed to allow room for the practice in your life though, you can expect to see radical results. “With continued development of a mindfulness practice, we can actually help to ‘rewire’ our brain,” Curling explains. “This practice encourages us to be more contemplative and less reactive.”

How to Start Your Own Mindfulness Routine

with tips from Trish Curling, Ani O Yoga

- Set a timer for [scheduled breathing](#) and/or movement breaks (these breaks can be short but meaningful)
- Focus on the *now* – bring your full attention to your task at hand, no matter what it is
- Clear a [space that is devoted to meditation](#) and/or a yoga practice (having a space set up with things that are meaningful to you and that bring calm can have an immediate effect on your mood)
- Seek out a [guided meditation online](#), either through an app or online platform that offers courses.
- Journal and/or write down affirmations that support what we want to experience in our lives (happiness, emotional, spiritual, financial health). Anything that we desire, we should not only focus on in our minds, but we should write down and actively imagine experiencing the sensations in our bodies that come with attaining these things.

PHOTO GRAPHIC 4:



Here is a list of some more [practices](#) to help with managing your stress:

- **Inkra or Dare**
- Painting or colouring
- Yoga
- Beading
- Playing with a pet animal

- Socializing (online via social media and virtual chats, over the phone and in-person)
- Working on a puzzle or a fun arts & craft project (either independently or with family)
- Reading
- Listening to music
- Lighting candles in your home
- Self-Care (i.e.- taking a bath, foot bath, getting a massage, washing your hair, etc...)
- Exercise (i.e.- jogging, lifting weights, dancing)
- [Grounding techniques](#) (“5 Senses”)

Alethia Cadore is a registered psychotherapist and licensed child youth care practitioner. She is a highly compassionate and well-oriented professional with years of experience working in clinical support, consultation, facilitation, and the social services sector. Alethia holds a MA in Education from Central Michigan University and an undergraduate degree in Child Youth Care from Ryerson University. Currently, she has her own Private practice CA Consultants and serves as a member of the OACYC (Ontario Association of Child Youth Counsellors).