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**STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR 2004: The Rest of the Story**

**By Pat Swan**

**STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR 2004: The Rest of the Story by Pat Swan, MS, Life and  
Relationship Coach**

Perhaps you are like many of the people I talk to who have moved on from the stress of the holidays and are now feeling the stress of everyday life. Would you really like to reduce or even eliminate some of the stress rather than just "manage" it? Would you like a healthier, happier life?

Stress is epidemic in our country. Norman Cousins, author of Anatomy of an Illness said that "stress is the most serious medical problem of our time." Chronic stress releases dangerous stress hormones and shuts down our immune system. Stress plays a major role in most illnesses including cancer, heart disease, fibromyalgia, migraines, gastrointestinal problems, arthritis and many more. Stress related symptoms are the reason for 90% of doctor office visits. Stress kills.

If you are like me, you have probably taken at least one of those "stress tests." You know, the kind where you check off all of the possible life stressors you have experienced and then realize you have checked most of them. Then what? Do we just wait to get sick? What are we supposed to do about it?

Most of the people I talk to say that the stress management strategies suggested to them include exercise, nutrition, yoga, meditation, relaxation, deep breathing, and perhaps a hot bath.

What if I told you that NONE of these will help you reduce or eliminate your stress? They all may be helpful in boosting immune function, clearing the mind, or developing physical fitness. But they will provide, at most, momentary relief from the ongoing problem of chronic stress.

WHY? Because stress is EMOTION that results from LIFE EVENTS. An event happens, we interpret it, we generate emotion. Stressful emotions include fear, worry, anxiety, anger, rage, grief, hurt, shame. Emotions eat at us. They make us sick. Stressful LIFE EVENTS include relationship problems, life/work balance problems, career issues, parenting problems, life issues around purpose and priorities, financial problems, and many more.

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If we have financial problems, we worry about retirement, the mortgage, the 401k, just paying the bills. We ruminate about the worst that could happen. We fear possible losses. We develop anxiety and ulcers. Existing illness worsens.

If we feel angry about past events, our parents or our former spouse, we think about the injustices, we fan the flames. We ruminate, become resentful and bitter. Dangerous stress hormones pour into our system. We develop heart disease or gastrointestinal problems.

Of course it's always easier to run to the gym and work out, rather than run home and work out our problems.

It's easier to sit in the corner by ourselves and meditate, rather than sit at the financial counselor's office and struggle to work out a budget.

What can you do? Gather your courage and identify and face the specific issues that are causing the stress in your life. You can reduce stress, enhance relationships, simplify your life and feel healthier and happier.

Follow these four steps to live a healthier, happier life.

1. Identify the source of the problem.
2. Decide what needs to be done to resolve the problem.
3. Develop a step-by-step plan to achieve the desired goal.
4. Follow through one step at a time.

If you need help with any of the steps, get it. There are excellent resources in the area to help you with any problem that may be causing you stress. Determine for 2004 to begin a new life with less stress and more fun.

©Pat Swan, M.S., Life and Relationship Coach, <http://www.RelationshipSkillville.com> . Pat is a speaker, and author of "Watch Out! Your Relationships Can Be Hazardous to Your Health," available at <http://www.StopRelationshipStress.com> . Stop relationship stress and discover secret remedies for better health. [Mailto:pat@patswan.com](mailto:pat@patswan.com) . PH: 262-642-5706.

### **Five Steps For Stress Relief**

**By Christa Reynolds**

These days stress is almost unavoidable and it is a fact that people are not concerned about the causes of stress but they are more inclined towards stress management, stress relief and stress reduction. You cannot avoid or ignore stress in your life. You may be suffering from stress due to

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various reasons that include work pressure, changing weather, relationships, financial problems and family. It has been found that almost every person is stressed that involves one or more of the above reasons. To achieve stress relief, stress management has become really important.

Stress is not a disease but you should consider this fact that in today's scenario, stress is the root cause of some major health hazards. Depression, acidity (other stomach problems) and even heart attack are rooted in stress. Stress relief will definitely decrease the chances of these ailments.

However, the main question is how? Experts have concluded through experience that the magic of stress relief lies in your own hands. There are many stress management institutions that can help you get relief from stress and let your body and mind relax. There are many toll-free numbers so that you can discuss your problem over phone with the counselors. You will realize in most of the cases that the solution is in your own control. Stress is a very intrinsic ailment so a sense of confidence and relaxing measures can help you in stress relief.

For stress management you can try some of the tips and if they do not help then consulting counselors and doctors is advisable.

1. **Work according to your strength:** A major reason for stress is that you tend to overload yourself with work. Try and maintain a balance between your rest and work. It will keep you healthy.
2. **Take proper diet:** Having proper diet is very essential for effective stress management. Lots of fruits and vegetables will be helpful.
3. **Exercise regularly:** This is regarded as the real solution for stress. When you exercise, you relax your body and mind and this works as complete stress-buster. You can opt for aerobics or join a health club according to your choice.
4. **Talk with people:** Sharing thoughts with friends and family has always helped in stress reduction. On many occasions you are in stress because there is no-one around you.
5. **Meditate:** It has become a very popular method of stress management. More and more people are benefiting from this mode as it soothes your mind and relax it completely.

There are different levels of stress and you are a better person to get rid of it as soon as possible. If you think that it has reached an unbearable level and is affecting your health then consult doctors to eliminate the problem and get stress relief.

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