

Stress Control For Teachers

Written By Professor James F. Hubbard * Edited By Rick Hubbard

Benefits of Stress Control

SELF CONTROL

Nervous tensions arise from daily experiences, especially from those that are difficult to handle. Stressful situations stimulate the adrenal gland to release hormones into the blood, which makes a person reactive. Control of one's word is difficult. Verbal attacks are quick and negative words fly. People say things they do not really want to say. Often innocent members of one's family receive this displaced aggression. Self control can be improved.

WARM FRIENDLY FEELINGS

Difficult encounters tend to curb positive feelings. A person likes to smile and display a sense of humor. Friendly social interaction is an enjoyable experience. People like to notice the good deeds and accomplishments of those around them. They like to use praise and commendation. They like to be good listeners as others relate their positive experiences. They know that positive feelings promote good work and reduce negative experiences.

ENERGY SUPPLY

Fatigue near the end of the day is a common experience. Many of us have continuing responsibilities after the work day is completed. We must push ourselves when we really don't have the energy to proceed. Tiredness signals a case of "too much crud in the blood." Stress control cleans the blood.

WEIGHT GAIN PREVENTION

When nervous tensions rise from difficult experiences, the blood sugar level is elevated to provide extra energy for fight or flight. When the blood sugar is not used in exercise, the body lowers it by metabolizing it into fat and storing it as adipose tissue.

HEALTH AGGRAVATION REDUCTION

When nervous tensions are not reduced, they can cause a number of aggravations like headaches, indigestion, colds and flu, elimination problems, as well as numerous aches and pains. Stress control reduces all of these.

HEALTHY HEART FUNCTION

Difficult experiences elevate blood pressure and increase the heart rate. They also cause the release of fat into the blood. It remains in the blood and is gradually deposited on the walls of the blood vessels. These narrowed blood vessels cause the blood pressure to elevate and lowers the nutrition supply to many vital organs.

OVERALL GOOD HEALTH

Nervous disorders, ulcers, hypertension, and other health problems may well be related to nervous tensions which persist over the years. Pollution in the bloodstream is detrimental to healthy cell life. Stress control is useful in both blood cleansing and reducing nervous tensions.

This Booklet Is A Free Gift From The Hubbard Family
And Is Dedicated To My Mother, A Teacher

Ellen Collins Hubbard

(October 1, 1923 - December 10, 2004)



Ellen Hubbard graduated from Madison College (now James Madison University) in Virginia. Her first teaching assignment was at Ginter Park Elementary School in Richmond, VA.

When the family moved to Laurinburg, NC, she began teaching a third grade class at Covington Street School. In addition she offered private tutoring and art lessons.

Over the years Ellen developed a stress related illness which forced her to resign from teaching on disability. Her husband, James F. Hubbard, a professor of psychology, wrote this booklet with the hope that other teachers would not develop stress related disabilities while doing the important job of teaching the children we love.

When I was a small child my Mom often read to me the story of "The Little Engine That Could" with the memorable message, "I think I can, I think I can." I still remember that message.

Rick Hubbard

Stress Control For Teachers

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Stress Inventory

Use the following numbers to score yourself on the first 25 items below:

- 1 - less than once monthly
- 2 - about once a month
- 3 - more than once a month

How Often Do You:

- ___1. experience headaches?
- ___2. find it difficult to wake up and get out of bed in the morning?
- ___3. feel rushed to get somewhere?
- ___4. worry over an experience that has already happened to you?
- ___5. worry over something that might happen to you?
- ___6. feel your heart pounding for several minutes?
- ___7. experience itching rashes that last for several days?
- ___8. feel aches in your muscles?
- ___9. have colds or other respiratory infections?
- ___10. experience digestive difficulties?
- ___11. have choking sensations?
- ___12. experience watery bowels?
- ___13. get up during the night to urinate?
- ___14. feel tired?
- ___15. feel restless and cannot relax?
- ___16. have difficulty getting to sleep?
- ___17. experience long and continuous dreaming?
- ___18. feel edgy and snap at people?
- ___19. have feelings of blues and sadness?
- ___20. have difficulty remembering what you read?
- ___21. have difficulty maintaining sustained attention to a lecturer or TV program?
- ___22. feel like telling someone off, but you don't?
- ___23. actually tell someone off in no uncertain terms?
- ___24. have to push yourself to get something accomplished?
- ___25. have to do something that you have no enjoyment in?

- ___26. How long does it take you to get over a difficult experience?
1) one day 2) a week 3) a month 4) longer than a month
- ___27. How often do you use alcohol?
1) not at all 2) maybe twice a year 3) usually only on weekends
4) almost every day
- ___28. How many cigarettes do you smoke each day?
1) none at all 2) less than a pack 3) more than a pack
- ___29. How often do you get 30 to 60 minutes of relaxing exercise?
1) daily 2) one a week 3) at least once a month 4) hardly ever
- ___30. How often do you drink coffee or tea?
1) not at all 2) once a day 3) twice a day 4) more than twice daily
- ___31. How often do you consume soft drinks?
1) never 2) once or twice daily
- ___32. How often do you eat a green salad?
1) twice daily 2) once daily 3) less often than once a day
- ___33. How often do you eat fruit or consume fruit juice?
1) twice daily 2) once daily 3) twice weekly 4) once weekly
- ___34. How often do you use over-the-counter drugs (aspirin, laxatives, cold remedies, etc.)?
1) hardly ever 2) once or twice annually 3) at least once a month
- ___35. How often do you use diet drinks or diet foods?
1) daily 2) once or twice a week 3) once a month 4) never
- ___36. How often do you have temper outbursts?
1) hardly ever 2) twice a year 3) once a month 4) every day

Scoring:

Under 60 Points = Low Stress Level
61 to 80 Points - Medium Stress Level
Above 81 Points - High Stress Level

Stressful Experiences For Teachers

Discipline - When children misbehave, they must be corrected. When the teacher sees trouble on the way, the stress button is triggered. How many times does this happen each day?

The Problem Child - In every class there is at least one. The misbehavior is repeated and requires action. The thought processes try to figure out what could be done. Even when this child stands up or moves the teacher is alerted.

Rushing - Teachers must be on time. Everything runs by the clock. The very thought of being late hits the stress button. When traffic problems emerge, there may be feelings of panic.

Pushing - Teachers have work overload. Papers must be graded. Lesson plans must be put in order. In addition many teachers have home responsibilities. They run out of time and must push themselves to work when they do not feel like it. Sometimes it requires extending the day and missing sleep.

Discussions With Parents - How many phone calls do teachers receive from concerned parents? Not only does it require time, but frequently it requires self-control when the teacher is criticized or blamed for the child's lack of success.

Report Card Time - Grading for some of the children is always a very emotional time. The teacher is caught between hurting and helping. The decision is never easy.

Professional Morale - Many teachers think about leaving the field. Their work has so many difficulties. Salaries are low compared to what they could make in the business world. They have doubts that society really appreciates them. How often do these thoughts plague them. The stress load of teachers is indeed heavy.

Stress Signals

Headaches - Tension headaches where there is a feeling of tightness associated with the pain indicate stress buildup. Some headaches are related to indigestion which is caused by malfunctioning of the stomach and small intestine caused by the stress reaction.

Sleeping Problems - When there is trouble getting to sleep and staying asleep, this indicates a high level of adrenaline in the blood. Dreaming is often vivid and continuous.

Fatigue Feelings - Tiredness after a long strenuous day and tiredness associated with frustration actually feel the same way. When a person wakes up tired after a good night's rest, this is a good sign that the blood still contains waste products.

Kidney and Bladder Problems - When a person is very thirsty and needs to drink liquids quite often, this is a good sign that the kidneys are working overtime to clean the blood stream. Stress triggers mouth dryness because it retards the flow of saliva.

Colon Difficulties - Stressful experiences increase colon activity leading to rapid transit. Loose and watery stools result. Gas production and noisy intestines are common. While there are other causes of this reaction, the frequency of it signals stress build up.

Irritability and Aggression - When tongue control is difficult and quick outbursts occur on a regular basis, this is a sign that the noradrenaline level in the blood is too high.

High Blood Pressure - The stress reaction raises the blood pressure. Too many stressful experiences can keep it high. This is called the silent killer because the person gets no signal that it is there. For people in stressful occupations blood pressure checks are a must.

Elevated Blood Sugar - The stress reaction raises the blood sugar level. To avoid diabetic tendencies blood sugar should be checked. There is a simple device available.

The Stress Reaction

The human body has a control system to deal with changing situations which occur. It is called the **Autonomic Nervous System**. If all is going well the Parasympathetic branch operates all of the internal organs. When an emergency arises, the Sympathetic branch operates the various organs to speed up activity and increase the supply of energy. This is called the stress reaction because it prepares the person for **Fight or Flight**. We must face the situation with anger or charge. Otherwise, a hasty retreat is in order.

The **circulatory system** is involved in the stress reaction. First of all, the circulation of the blood is speeded up so that energy supply can be quickly utilized. The **heart rate is increased** to pump the blood around the body more quickly. **Blood pressure is elevated** to speed it on its way. Also, the blood must be channeled away from the areas where it is not needed and directed to the muscles. The cranial arteries are constricted to reduce the blood supply to the thinking processes. **Memory and learning are often hampered when stressful situations arise**. The arteries to the digestive system are also constricted. The digestive processes must, therefore, be slowed down. The flow of digestive enzymes is retarded which may cause indigestion.

The stress reaction is involved in the **respiratory system**. The breathing rate is increased because more oxygen is needed and carbon dioxide must be expelled. The filter system called the mucosa must be made more efficient since more air is coming in. Pollution is trapped and nasal drainage may occur.

The stress reaction accelerates the activity of the entire excretory system. The pores of the skin are more active causing wet hands and foreheads as well as underarm wetness. The kidneys work faster requiring more frequent emptying of the bladder.

The stress reaction increases the work of the **metabolic system**. **Blood sugar is released**. Also, cholesterol is released as a secondary source of energy. If more blood sugar is needed the liver converts the cholesterol. The body is prepared for the increased use of the muscles. If motor activity does not occur, these products remain in the blood until removed in some other way.

The Adrenal Gland

During a stressful situation the **Adrenal Gland** releases two hormones into the blood. One of them called **adrenaline** lowers the threshold for the firing of neurons. All of the senses become more acute. Vision and hearing react more quickly. This would facilitate driving a car and other activities as in sports events. It becomes very beneficial when one has to engage in fighting or make a hasty retreat.

On the other hand keeping the eyes closed for sleeping is very difficult and even unnoticed sounds become very disturbing. The person is very sensitive to temperature changes in both directions, but feeling cold or hot can be managed with outer clothing. The pain sense is very active. Aches and pains are easily detected which disturbs both sleeping and relaxing. You can see why so many medications are on the shelf. Motor activity is generated at higher rates. Running is easy but walking slowly is difficult. Nervous hands are visible and dropping things quite frequent. The person eats fast and swallows quickly.

Quickness is good but the person may have difficulty sitting still or lying still for sleeping or relaxing. The person is more sensitive to touch. This can cause jumpiness but it does make affection more pleasant. The emotions are triggered more easily. There is an increase of fear and anxiety. Worry and concern are not easily controlled. Tears come quickly and are often profuse. Anger comes much too quickly. Words are charged with vehemence and tongue control is very difficult. The adrenal hormone indeed makes a super reactive person. For many tasks that teacher must perform adrenaline is not a real benefit. Unfortunately, the hormone in the blood does not make a quick exit.

A second hormone called **noradrenaline** is released to promote vasoconstriction to raise the blood pressure level and speed up the delivery of blood to important destinations. Also, noradrenaline is the chemical transmitter for the operation of the nervous system. Elevated blood pressure cannot easily be detected by the individual. It sometimes is involved in headaches but otherwise it is silent. One must conclude that when the adrenaline is up the noradrenaline is also up, you can see the importance of removing it from the blood.

Detoxification

There are two other hormones released from the cortex of the adrenal gland - the mineral corticoids and the glucocorticoids.

The **mineral corticoids** allow the minerals sodium, potassium, phosphorus, and calcium to reach higher levels during stress. They are involved in the neural firing process. If the level is too high the neurons fire erratically, if too low the firing is sluggish. If the fight or flight activity does not occur, these minerals remain in the blood and upset the *ph* level in the blood stream.

In order for the cells in the body to live properly the *ph* level must be near neutral. If too acid or too alkaline the metabolic system goes into action in a process called detoxification. Breathing, urination, and perspiration speed up to bring the *ph* level back to normal. In addition, chemical buffers are manufactured to control the toxic substances until they are expelled.

Vitamin C is involved in detoxification. If the level of vitamin C is low the detoxification process is slowed down. When a person uses alcohol or drugs, the level of the high received depends on the intoxication of the blood stream. Neurons are misfiring all over the body.

The other hormone, the **glucocorticoids**, are involved in the manufacture and control of the blood sugar. The liver is stimulated to turn fat into blood sugar. The pancreas releases blood sugar. When the blood sugar is too high the liver goes into action to remove it and store it as fat.

A person can gain weight from the stress reaction alone. Vitamin B complex is involved in the blood sugar process. If the level of this vitamin is low the control process is slow. The person becomes diabetic. It is not difficult to see how complicated the internal environment can become.

From the stress reaction inside the body, deposits into the bloodstream called **endotoxins** are numerous. **Exotoxins** from pleasure drugs and medications add to the problem. In addition, for all of us there are toxic agents in our foods and in our air from pesticides and automobile exhausts.

There are measures that can be taken to reduce the severity of the problem. They will be discussed in the following sections.

When I retired my students gave me a plaque which read:

**"YOU TAUGHT US ABOUT
THE 'CRUD' IN THE BLOOD."**

They learned how to get the "crud" out of the blood. You can learn, too, in the following sections.

It's The "CRUD" In The BLOOD.

Learn How To Get It Out.

Exercise

The most beneficial form of stress control is **exercise**. Muscle activity actually uses the products of the stress reaction.

Blood Sugar Is Burned For Energy. The blood sugar has been elevated by stress. Exercise uses the excess and restores stability in the blood stream.

Fat Is Made Into Blood Sugar. The triglyceride in the blood stream cannot be used as long as the blood sugar is high. As soon as exercise lowers the blood sugar to a certain level, the liver begins to turn the triglyceride into blood sugar. Removing the fat from the blood stream prevents deposits on the blood vessel walls.

The Adrenal Hormones Exit More Rapidly. Adrenalin from the stress reaction speeds up the activity of the senses and muscles. Thinking is also difficult to stop. Adrenalin makes us excited and nervous. We can't relax. We have a hard time getting to sleep. Exercise helps us to relax and promotes restful sleep. Noradrenaline prepares us to fight. It makes us irritable and angry. We lose our patience with our pupils and family quite easily. Exercise makes us less reactive and improves our disposition.

Muscle Tension Is Reduced. The stress reaction often makes the muscles tense and tight. This hampers accurate functioning especially in the fingers. Finger effectiveness is important for teachers. Muscle tension is often felt as pain in the head area and in the back. Exercise will improve finger effectiveness and remove pain.

Blood Cleansing Speeds Up. Waste products from the stress reaction must be removed. Exercise benefits the restoring of the blood stream to normal.

Exercise Should Be Regular. You should exercise daily if possible, at least three times weekly for good Stress Control. Thirty minutes of continuous muscle activity would be sufficient for the stress of normal days.

Good Diet Practices

In order to help the body rid itself of the products of the stress reaction **certain nutrients are needed** and **other foods should be avoided** or eaten in small quantity.

Nutrients Needed -

Vitamin C and Vitamin B Complex

Vitamin C is depleted by the stress reaction because it is used in the manufacture of the adrenal hormones. It is also used in the cleansing of the blood. It is needed to fortify the linings of the nasal cavities called the mucosa. It fights respiratory infections and reduces allergy reactions. Good stress control requires us to keep ourselves well supplied with vitamin C. It is a good practice to provide this nutrient with every meal because it cannot be stored. Citrus juice, tomato juice, V8 juice are good sources of Vitamin C. Salads with raw vegetables also work well. A stress control Poem - OJ each day gets the crud away.

Vitamin B complex is also depleted by the stress reaction. One B vitamin is involved in the control of blood sugar. Another one of the group stimulates the liver to remove fat from the blood. A third one is very important in the operation of the nervous system. Vitamin B complex is found in **whole grains**: wheat, barley, oats, corn, and brown rice. Wheat germ can be sprinkled over potatoes and cooked vegetables. Raw sunflower seed can be soaked in fruit juice for a delicious nutrient.

Foods Not Needed -

Sugar and Saturated Fat

Sugar in the diet should be reduced. The blood sugar level is already high from the stress reaction. Adding more sugar makes it difficult to lower the blood sugar. Cut down on desserts. Drink diet beverages.

Saturated fats should be limited in the daily diet. Cholesterol is the major saturated fat. It is found in animal fat, milk fat, butter, and egg yolks. You can use only egg whites or commercially packaged yolk free egg substitutes.

Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation - The stress reaction does not automatically turn off without some measure to close it down. Sit in a comfortable chair and close your eyes. Make a tight fist with your left hand as you say to your finger muscles "**Tense.**" Then release the fist and say; "**Relax**" Repeat this with your right hand. Then tense your arms by touching them to the shoulders and relaxing them with the command. Raise your arms over your head reaching for the sky and then relax them. Push your chin to your chest to tense your neck and then relax it. Tense your chest muscles with deep breathing and then relax them. Tighten your stomach muscles and relax them. Curl your toes tightly and relax them. This procedure will cut off the stress reaction. Use it after the work day is over.

Threefold Calming Command - Another shorter technique may be beneficial when there is not time for longer and more thorough method. Say to yourself: "**Be calm, keep cool, relax.**" Then count slowly to yourself by thousands 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000, 5000, and then repeat the Threefold calming command to yourself. This can be repeated.

Meditation - Meditation is a form of bringing to the mind positive experiences. This thought process brings on a measure of relaxation and halts the stress reaction. Review the positive experiences of the day and jot them down to refer to on future day.

Imaginary Experiences - Close your eyes and go down to the beach in your imagination. Smell the salt air, watch the waves as they roll to the shore. Hear the soothing sound. Look above at the seagulls and pelicans. Feel the sand between your toes. Use as many senses as you can. Some people enjoy mountain scenery. Views, gurgling streams, and waterfalls are relived in the imagination. Smell the fresh air, feel the cool breeze visualize the beautiful wild flowers and rock formations.

Descend To Calmness - After your fantasy experiences return to the city in your mind. Start at the 10th floor on an elevator and count the floors 9, 8, 7 until you reach the ground floor.

Reducing Toxins

Stress fills the bloodstream with products which must be removed: blood sugar, fat, minerals, hormones. The proper functioning of the nervous system and healthy cell life depend on a clean blood stream. Nervous disorders or cancer may develop from contamination in the blood, especially if it stays this way for a long period of time. The products of stress can be removed much more quickly when we do not add other toxins to be disposed of.

Nicotine is a toxin which must be removed from the blood. Smoking cigarettes or chewing tobacco slows down the rate of blood cleansing by adding nicotine. Since nicotine is a relaxing drug, it gives a person a false sense of well being. It conceals the stress signals the body sends to warn a person of internal disorder. If you can't stop smoking, or at least cut down, smoke one cigarette and use a substitute habit like sugarless chewing gum for the second smoke. Practicing stress control principles will greatly reduce the need for nicotine, making it possible for you to break the habit.

Alcohol is similar to nicotine in its function but promotes a deeper level of blood pollution depending on how much is consumed. When one begins to feel effects, this is the time to stop. "Know when to say no". Alcohol with food, and alcohol in a fruit juice base add less contamination to the blood.

Caffeine is found in coffee, tea, soft drinks, and chocolate. It IS a stimulant which kills fatigue feelings. Tiredness is a body signal that the waste products in the blood are already high. When one wakes up in the morning still tired, it is a good sign that the blood did not fully cleanse itself during sleep. Caffeine adds more pollution to a blood stream already full of waste products.

Food and Beverage Additives are listed on the containers. You can read the list of flavor enhancers, artificial coloring, artificial sweeteners, preservatives, and other non-natural ingredients. If one is not careful, these pollutants can pile up very rapidly.

Over-The-Counter Drugs should be used with moderation. Pill popping can become too easy. These drugs vary in the degree of pollution they add to the blood. Try less drastic ways of relief. Headaches and indigestion sometimes respond to lying down and resting. Constipation is often relieved by relaxing and drinking fruit juice. Sleep can be promoted by music or relaxation exercises.

The Problem Child

The so called “**problem child**” is one that is exhibiting stress generated behavior. The child is easily provoked to anger and outbursts. This child may be suffering from low self-esteem, negative home life, lack of successes in schoolwork and sports, and stress build-up. Lowering the stress in the “problem child” can lower the stress in the teacher as well.

Lowering Stress In The Problem Child

Keep Your Cool - The problem child builds self-esteem by upsetting the adult world. When the teacher becomes upset the problem child achieves a success.

Introduce A Behavior Improvement Plan - Determine a baseline for inappropriate behavior and reward the child when improvements are noticed. Accent the positive behaviors.

Discover Ways To Bring More Positives Into The Child’s Life - Try to arrange regular friendly chats with the child to discover likes and dislikes, joys and problems. The chat itself is positive and makes the child feel important. Finding positive things for the child to do and giving positive reinforcement will help raise the child’s self-esteem and help modify the behavior.

Institute A Strenuous Exercise Program - This will reduce the nervous tensions from the stress build-up and give the child more behavior control. Encourage active play, running, and contests. Praise positive results.

Search For Opportunities To Raise Self-Esteem - The child may find successes in art, music, or other activities. Give the child opportunities to succeed in new areas.

Standardized Tests

All teachers want their children to do their best on standardized tests. Stress affects children in testing situations. There are a few principles that might help lower the stress and raise the scores.

Keep The Pressure Down - Making a big deal about the upcoming tests raises the stress levels in children. They may not sleep well; their digestion may be disturbed; their kidneys will be activated; and their elimination process may be disturbed. Train them to relax by doing things they enjoy in the evening before the test. It is best to get the test off their minds.

Get Them Relaxed Just Before Test Time - Do some fun things in the classroom to reduce their tensions. Music and dancing can be very good activities. Play simple games.

Engage In Physical Activity - Before the test it is very beneficial to do exercise or outdoor activities. Take them for a walk outside or do a running game. Exercise reduces nervous tensions and clears the mind.

Avoid Rushing - Whenever possible help children avoid rushing during the test. Rushing triggers the stress reaction and builds up inner tensions. Children should learn to go at their own pace and slow down when necessary.

Relax At Intervals During The Test - During breaks in the test schedule children should relax. Try the progressive muscle relaxation method or other method to tense and relax the muscles.

Practicing these stress reducing principles may well increase the scores of children on standardized tests. Some will benefit more than others. Children who are not doing well with schoolwork will benefit the most.

Stress Control For Teachers

Things To Remember:

Stress Puts The “Crud” In The Blood

Get It Out With:

Exercise * Good Diet Practices * Relaxation * Reducing Toxins