

Contents

Preface: A Message from Kenford Nedd, M.D.	xii
Introduction	1
<i>Quick Stress Quiz 1: How Stressed Are You?</i>	3
PART ONE	
So You Think You Know All about Stress ...	7
Stress Can Be a Killer	9
Stress Reaction Part 1: Flipping the Switch	11
<i>Quick Checkup: How Do You Rate Your Stress Level?</i>	14
Stress Reaction Part 2: Living in the Hormone Rush	14
<i>Quick Checkup: How Does Feeling Good Feel to You?</i>	16
Stress Reaction Part 3: All Tensed Up	17
<i>Quick Prescription 1: Cool Your "Hot Spots"</i>	19
Stress Reaction Part 4: Boarding the Emotional Roller Coaster	19
<i>Quick Prescription 2: Develop Emotional Awareness</i>	23
Stress Damage: Taking It to Heart and Mind	24
<i>Quick Prescription 3: Turn Off the Tap</i>	26

Stress Damage: No One's Immune	26
<i>Quick Checkup: When Do You Get Sick and Tired?</i>	28
How Do You React to Stress?	29
<i>Quick Checkup: How Was Your Week?</i>	32
 PART TWO	
From Stress Reaction to Calm Response	33
What Is This Thing Called Stress?	35
<i>Quick Checkup: What's Pushed Your Buttons Lately?</i>	39
Perception: The Gateway to Stress ... or Not	40
<i>Quick Prescription 4: Perceive Yourself as a Winner</i>	43
You Choose Your Response	44
<i>Quick Prescription 5: Block a Stress Reaction</i>	47
Defusing Stress: Step-by-Step	48
<i>Quick Prescription 6: Put Stress under A.R.R.E.S.T.</i>	50
Anticipate and Plan	50
<i>Quick Prescription 7: Head Stress Off at the Pass</i>	54
Restrict the Influence of the Stressor	54
<i>Quick Prescription 8: Rein in Your Stressors</i>	57
Respond Calmly, Don't Just React	58
<i>Quick Prescription 9: Calmly Handle a Stressful Situation</i>	60
Establish Control over Your Body's Reactions	61
<i>Quick Prescription 10: Train Your Muscles to Relax</i>	62
Slow Down and Seek Your Inner Strength	63

<i>Quick Prescription 11: Go Inside to Find Your Strength</i>	67
Think Optimistically about Your Goals	67
<i>Quick Prescription 12: Keep Your Eyes on Your Goals</i>	71
Don't Hesitate to Deploy Your Resources	71
<i>Quick Prescription 13: Call Up All Your Reserves</i>	75
Quick Stress Quiz 2: Rate Your Resilience to Stress	77
PART THREE	
Stress-Proofing for Life	81
Living with Purpose	86
<i>Quick Prescription 14: Define Your Purpose</i>	90
Choosing Your Commitments	91
<i>Quick Prescription 15: Align Your Commitments</i>	93
Affirming Your Beliefs	94
<i>Quick Prescription 16: Experience the Magic of Belief</i>	96
Building a Positive Mental and Emotional State	97
<i>Quick Prescription 17: Use Your Emotional Awareness</i> <i>(Emotional Redirection Part 1)</i>	100
Changing Your Negative Emotions	101
<i>Quick Prescription 18: Shift Emotional Gears</i> <i>(Emotional Redirection Part 2)</i>	105
The Best Emotions to Choose	106
<i>Quick Prescription 19: Make an Emotional Choice</i> <i>(Emotional Redirection Part 3)</i>	111
Building Physiological Harmony	112

<i>Quick Checkup: What Kind of Shape Are You in?</i>	114
Breathe, for Goodness' Sake, Breathe	115
<i>Quick Prescription 20: Master the Art of Abdominal Breathing</i>	118
Stand Up for Yourself	119
<i>Quick Prescription 21: Make the Adjustments</i>	122
Take Time Out for Exercise or Plan to Take Time Out for Sickness	123
<i>Quick Prescription 22: Exercise Your Options</i>	129
Fuel The Machine	130
<i>Quick Prescription 23: Eat to Build Resilience</i>	136
When Your Size Is a Problem	136
<i>Quick Prescription 24: Cut Yourself Down to Size</i>	142
It's Not Just Beauty Sleep	143
<i>Quick Prescription 25: Make Sleep Time Count</i>	147
Reclaim Your Energy	148
<i>Quick Prescription 26: Do the Daily Anti-Stress Workout</i>	154
 PART FOUR	
Dealing with the Key Stressors in Your Life	157
Learn to Benefit from Change	159
<i>Quick Prescription 27: Sail with the Winds of Change</i>	164
Pressed for Time	165
<i>Quick Prescription 28: Master Your Time Pressures</i>	168

When It's People You Can't Stand	169
<i>Quick Prescription 29: Reduce Stress from Other People</i>	174
When You Are the Problem	175
Cut Your Ego Down to Size	176
<i>Quick Prescription 30: Rein in Your Ego</i>	178
That's Just Me, I'm a Worrier	179
<i>Quick Prescription 31: End Needless Worry</i>	181
Paralyzed by Fear?	182
<i>Quick Prescription 32: Drive Back Fear</i>	186
When You're in a Lousy Mood	186
<i>Quick Prescription 33: Transform Your Mood</i>	189
Dealing with Depression	190
<i>Quick Prescription 34: Overcome Depression</i>	195
The Pursuit of Happiness	197
<i>Quick Prescription 35: Get a Merry Heart</i>	199
Summing Up	201
Contacting Kenford Nedd, M.D.	209

WHEN I ASK my patients to tell me about the stressors in their lives, most of them talk about three sources. People tell me most often about constant change, never having enough time, and the fact that other people are driving them crazy. Let us deal with these key stressors one by one.

Learn to Benefit from Change

IN THE OLD days, when change was not so continual, it used to be said that, “variety is the spice of life.” Since then, it’s been widely suggested that in the Western world more change has occurred in the last 50 years than in the previous 1,000 years. Now change, and the variety it brings with it, is not the spice of life; change is life itself. According to Peter Vaill, author of *Learning as a Way of Being*, we live in “a world of permanent white water.” Sudden, unexpected changes and conflicting demands seem to be the order of the day.

If you intend to live your life well, you must develop a plan for dealing with change. If you don’t, you will be bowled

over by the changes that come your way and buffeted by the stress reaction that comes along as part of the package.

Since change is an unavoidable part of life, make the decision today to welcome it. This means that you're going to plan to benefit from change whenever it crosses your path. Don't think in terms of tolerating change or coping with change. Make up your mind that you are going to keep your eye out for change and benefit every time.

First and foremost, don't ever fight change, even when it is rudely imposed upon you. While it is easier to suffer, sulk, and complain, you will waste your energy and you will lose the fight. Just remember that change is inevitable. Accept the reality and work to profit from it. Whether the change is expected or comes as a surprise, regard it as a friend and resolve to benefit from it. This doesn't mean that your life will be easy, but it should ensure that you suffer less from stress.

We have a tendency to automatically think of change as loss. If a friend were to tell you that things have changed, you would immediately assume that something bad has happened—even before your friend had time to explain. If your spouse were to say to you, "There's been a change in plans," that's usually cause to resist the news and argue for what you were expecting. If your boss were to announce, "There are going to be some changes around here," it would be hard not to panic.

We usually fear change because we think that it will leave us worse off than we were before. We like what is familiar, especially when there is no disaster associated with it. As far as we're concerned, the unknown is full of potential disasters that we won't be able to control, so we adopt an attitude of fear. We forget that even if we are not the one who has chosen

to make the change, we have the power to determine whether a change will make us better or worse off. For example, if the change is dismissal from your job, you can use the occasion to get another job and to profit more from your daily efforts.

Remember the critical role of perception whenever you are faced with sudden and unexpected change. Perceive yourself as powerful and capable, and the situation as manageable. In the face of change, refuse to perceive yourself as a victim, no matter how big a wrench has been thrown into your day or your future. If you see yourself as a victim, your immune system, your endocrine system, and your cardiovascular system will begin to suffer as one change after another crosses your path. So never choose to think you are helpless in the face of the inevitable changes that will happen to you, even if you seem to have no control. Look at the change in the larger context of your purpose in life and ask yourself how you can use it to help you fulfill your purpose.

The second weapon in your arsenal against the stress of change is the knowledge that you can choose your response. You can decide to use a change in your circumstances to further your purpose in life, whatever the change may be or whenever it may strike. This is a crucial decision that will determine whether you go through life as a relaxed individual or a stressed-out, complaining victim. Every hardship or opposition has the potential to make you better and stronger. Don't miss out on these gifts for self-improvement that are brought to you by change.

Decide now that whenever you must respond to a change, you will spend your time and energy only on efforts that will help that change to put you in a better position than you were in before. Don't mope. Don't blame. Don't prophesy catastrophe.

Don't indulge in self-pity. This takes energy and you might as well use the energy to arrange your life so that you will reap those benefits that may be hidden in the change.

Develop a resolute and positive disposition as far as change is concerned. If you resolve to benefit from any change that touches your life, you will become mentally strong and the changes that come with modern life will only enrich your journey. Remember that the real secret of success is not what happens outside but what happens inside—in your thoughts, in your immune system, in your energy level, and in your sense of confidence and strength. You can control all these factors.

Remember, when a man has a hammer, everything looks like a nail. When you are intent on seeing only opportunity, that is what you will see and adversity becomes a stranger to you. Recognize change as an inspiration for creating a better life.

Enlist all the help you can get, including your finest intellectual effort, in order to turn a potentially negative event into a benefit. Give yourself time to examine the potential of the change instead of automatically assuming that disaster is about to darken your future. Use some of the following questions to analyze a change before you make a decision about how to handle it:

- Who's initiating the change and who exactly is it affecting?
- What aspects of your life will be affected, and what aspects won't be affected?
- Why is the change happening?
- Where will the effects be most apparent?
- When will the change take place?

- How will the change affect your goals in life and what's important to you? How can you use the circumstances to spark positive energy in the rest of your life? How can you restrict any negative influences?

Jamie had been starting his day by exercising at a gym on his way to work for the past few years and had gotten into a comfortable routine. The workouts made him feel good, he'd lost some weight, and the timing suited his schedule. That was about to change.

He received a notice in the mail that the facility he belonged to would be closing in a few months. The company that ran the chain had just done an expensive refurbishment of a club a few blocks away. When it reopened, Jamie's would close. The company had offered some options to current members—they could switch to the new facility, go to another club in the chain, or get a refund on their membership and go elsewhere.

Pete was in the dressing room when Jamie arrived the next morning and he asked Jamie what he thought he might do. Jamie said, "I talked to my wife about it last night and I found out she's interested in joining a gym—she just didn't want to come here because it was so run-down. We're going to look for another gym on the way to work, and I'm hoping she'll join me in the morning workout routine. What about you?"

Pete said, "My company relocated about six months ago. I could find something closer to the new office. On the other hand, this is close to home and the new facility looks like it will be pretty state-of-the-art. There will be a bigger variety of equipment, and your wife's right about this place . . . it would be nice to be somewhere that's a bit cleaner and classier. Have you talked to Ed yet?"

Jamie grinned. "What was he upset about a couple of weeks ago? They changed the location of the photocopier on his floor? He went on about that for three days. This should be good."

Just then, Ed walked in. His face was red. “Did you get that notice?” he demanded. “They can’t close this club. I’ve been coming here for fifteen years! It’s the way I start my day—I can’t change that. I’m going to start a petition and stop this. It’s a disgrace the way they think they can push us around!”

Jamie and Pete exchanged winks and headed out to the weight room.

QUICK PRESCRIPTION 27

Sail with the Winds of Change

- 1) Make up your mind that you will always welcome and benefit from change. This means that you will suffer less stress and achieve greater success, but it does not mean your life will be easy.
- 2) Focus your thoughts and your energy on finding ways in which you can benefit from the new circumstances. Will the change make it easier or more difficult to achieve your goals?
- 3) Evaluate the change in light of your purpose. Can you create new goals that are more worthy than the ones you had aspired to before?
- 4) Take the opportunity to do some thinking and be clear about what you want to do with your life. Ask yourself, “What do I really want to get out of my life and how will this change help me get it?”