The mission of AIS is to improve the health of the community and the world by setting the standard of excellence of stress management in education, research, clinical care and the workplace. Diverse and inclusive, The American Institute of Stress educates medical practitioners, scientists, health care professionals and the public; conducts research; and provides information, training and techniques to prevent human illness related to stress.

AIS provides a diverse and inclusive environment that fosters intellectual discovery, creates and transmits innovative knowledge, improves human health, and provides leadership to the world on stress related topics.
Contentment is a quarterly magazine published in Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter with news and advertising designed with the general public in mind. It appeals to all those interested in the myriad and complex interrelationships between stress and health because technical jargon is avoided and it is easy to understand. Contentment is archived online at stress.org. Information in this publication is carefully compiled to ensure accuracy.

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3/4 Medical Visits are Related to Stress!
Now more than ever, we must learn to address stress!
Generous contributions help fund educational programs, institutional resources, research and less stressful lives.

Click here or visit www.stress.org/give/make-a-gift to donate today!
Faster Than Drugs and Without Their Side Effects

Prescription drugs are sometimes necessary. However, when a patient refuses to take them, has adverse side effects or a history of addiction, or you’re out of medication options, Alpha-Stim provides another tool for your armamentarium. It is fast, safe and proven effective, even in the most difficult patients, as evidenced by the recent study of advanced cancer patients at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

The brain functions electrochemically and can be readily modified by electrical intervention. Alpha-Stim utilizes Cranial Electrotherapy Stimulation (CES) and Microcurrent Electrical Therapy (MET) to deliver the only patented waveform for a device of its class, with more than 100 clinical studies over 37 years, no serious adverse effects, and no risk of addiction.

**LATEST RESEARCH:** The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, “Cranial Electrotherapy Stimulation for the Management of Depression, Anxiety, Sleep Disturbance, and Pain in Patients with Advanced Cancer”

**PAIN REDUCTION**

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**DECREASED DEPRESSION**

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**REFERENCE**


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To get started and to see more clinical data, visit [www.Alpha-Stim.com/AIS](http://www.Alpha-Stim.com/AIS) or call **1-800-FOR-PAiN** (in USA) or **+940-328-0788** (Outside USA).
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As we get ready to close another amazing year, I’m beyond excited to announce new programming and membership benefits being added for 2019, including our first professional Stress Educator Certificate program and a new, improved online learning center for AIS members and the communities we serve. https://www.stress.org/memberships/

Stress Mastery Professional Training Program

Recognizing the need for systemic programming to alleviate the current stress epidemic, The American Institute of Stress will launch the first professional certificate program integrating both educational and transformational programming that will be accessible to learners across multiple industries and organizational roles starting in 2019. Our Scientific Advisory Board, Senior Teaching Faculty and Advisory Faculty have been working together the last two years to develop the most effective learning experience, incorporating both online and in-person training and ongoing educational and business development support.

Applications are being accepted throughout the year, and qualified candidates will be notified of their acceptance and provided with available upcoming training dates and details. If you’re interested in being considered for one of our 2019 programs, you can get more information and apply at www.stress.org/SMPro.

New Online Learning Portal

In addition to our professional certificate programs, we’re also very excited to be launching a new online training platform that will provide both personal and professional learning opportunities. Here, qualified AIS members, diplomates and fellows will have the opportunity to showcase their research along with training and development modules that meet our advisory board standards. An official call for programming will be sent to all AIS members in Spring of 2019. Our new online learning portal will go live in Spring of 2019 and a link will be emailed to all members.

Other Ways to Get Involved with AIS

As we continue to build out our educational content for the new year, we want to invite members of all levels to consider contributing to our ongoing outreach through our blogs, media connections and speaker’s bureau. We are currently seeking advisory board members who are willing to serve for a 2-year term on our various content committees (writing, speaking, teaching, research and conference planning). If interested, please send a short email including your area of interest and attach a current bio or CV to heidi@stress.org.

Our History

The American Institute of Stress is a non-profit organization established in 1978 at the request of Hans Selye to
serve as a clearinghouse for information on all stress related subjects. Stress has become such an ingrained part of our vocabulary that it’s hard to believe it was first introduced just 50 years ago by Selye to describe the “the body’s nonspecific response to any demand, whether it is caused by or results in pleasant or unpleasant stimuli.”

Over the last 40 years, we’ve expanded our services and broadened our reach, but our dedication to science hasn’t changed a bit. Our mission is to improve the health of the community and the world by setting the standard of excellence of stress management in education, research, clinical care and the workplace. Diverse and inclusive, the American Institute of Stress educates medical practitioners, scientists, health care professionals and the public; conducts research; and provides information, training and techniques to prevent human illness related to stress.

Our main focus areas include: Combat Stress, Daily Life (workplace stress, stress-less schools), Horizons: expanding human potential. Our services include: Stress research, learning center, speaker’s bureau, professional certificate program, business development support and more. https://www.stress.org/pubsmultimedia/publications/

Our Future

A IS is growing at a rapid pace as we continue to face a growing epidemic of stress across the globe. The future of
New Year’s Goals Are Two-Faced
Avoiding the stress of motivational mismatch could be the key to achieving more of what you want or don’t want in the new year.
What do you do in your life right now that brings you immense joy? It feels effortless to you because you like doing it. In fact, if you didn’t do this activity you would miss it. You want to do it.

What would that be for you?

Well done, that’s what innate motivation feels like.

It’s something you already do, yet most of us don’t understand with any precision what really motivates us, so we may find it stressful to be consistently motivated or to sustain accelerated performance.

As business, community or family leaders, we may struggle with getting and staying motivated ourselves, let alone inspiring others to do the same.

We all want to do more and have more in the new year.

Or do we?

How would it feel for you to make a New Year’s Resolution that was titled — “Things to do to get more in the new year!”?

Now, how would it feel to write at the top of your list something like — “Things to stop and problems to solve in the New Year?”

Read them again.

Which one motivates you and which one de-motivates you or just doesn’t make sense to you?

Understanding your answer and the insights to your own motivational triggers, could make this your most stress-free and productive New Year’s.

Let’s do a little exploration:

1. Get a blank piece of paper.
2. Understand that there are no right or wrong answers.
3. Your immediate answers will help you gain the most insight.
4. At the top write down a context that you like to think about. As an example, “Increasing my efficiency at work.” Write down what you’d like to think about.
5. Answer this next question immediately.
6. In the context of (your answer, like my efficiency at work answer) what’s most important to you?
7. Next answer this question.
8. Why is (your answer above) most important to you?
9. Write your answer immediately.
10. Look at the language that you wrote down and read the rest of the article to unlock your understanding of what really motivates you in this context. The motivational triggers are the keys for understanding what drives you to do or not do. These are keys called innate motivators that sit under the

Learning how to recognize your own motivational triggers will help you get and stay more naturally focused on getting what you want, while being able to build trust and influence others to get more of what they want.
conscious level of our behavior yet are at the root of driving our motivation or shutting it down.

Learning how to recognize your own motivational triggers will help you get and stay more naturally focused on getting what you want, while being able to build trust and influence others to get more of what they want.

Moving Away from a Problem

Sam loved lists! He loved making them, re-writing them and more than anything, he loves crossing items off his lists. That’s the best!

Sam was seen by many of his co-workers as a high achiever. So, he is, but what contexts or situations trigger Sam to get and stay motivated?

Sam loved crossing items off his lists because when he “checked off the box” he felt a sense of happiness and relief. “I don’t want things hanging over my head at work,” Sam would say when asked why checking off the box gave him such a good feeling. “I feel tremendous pressure when I have all this work that needs to be done. I can’t get the list out of my mind and feel much more relaxed when the pressure is off. I used to do check marks on my list paper, now I feel better when I put a thick marker line through the whole task.”

Sam was motivated in the context of work, to stop doing or move away from his list of tasks or problems.

From the outside, Sam looked like a work list killer, a focused high achieving goal smasher yet on the inside, Sam, just wanted to get the pressure off him, so he could relax. His goal was to relieve pressure and relax, not achieve…. in the context of work.

Moving Towards a Goal

Sam is also a coach for his eight-year-old son’s little league baseball team.

He wants his son’s team to win! He thinks about achieving victory, wants to plan the best practice and field the
strongest roster to get a win for the team. In his spare time, he talks to other coaches to learn better tips for training his team.

“I want to get a win for the team. I want to get these kids to play at their best and know what it feels like to get a championship.”

Sam wants to be at his best, so the team he coaches can be at their best. Sam, in the context of being a little league baseball coach is motivated towards a goal.

**Listen to the Language**

Listen to the language to unlock meaning. Context is key for understanding our own innate motivators

- **In the context of being a little league baseball coach: Motivated towards a goal**
  - Sam is triggered to act by anything that he thinks will help him achieve the wonderful feeling he associates with his son’s team winning a baseball game.
  - Uses language in this context like, “get” “have” “achieve” “I want to get a win for the team. I want to get these kids...” (Note: “I want...”)
  - Good feelings associated with “getting” or “having” success as a little league coach.
  - Thinks in terms of focusing on their goals and staying energized to go after them.
  - Good at managing priorities, challenged by recognizing problems to avoid.

- **In the context of work: Motivated away from a problem**
  - Sam is triggered to act by anything that he thinks will help him get work pressure away from him.
  - Uses language in this context that have to do with “problems” finding them or solving them. “I don’t want things hanging over my head at work.” (Note: “I don’t want....”)
  - Good feelings are generated by avoiding problems. They can speak in terms of finding them and fixing them before they appear.
  - Thinks in terms of getting away from problems and of situations to be avoided.
  - Talented problem solvers, yet he can have challenges with completing a project.

- **Relevance and value of knowing yourself and other's innate motivations**
  - Understand what stimulates and maintains your motivation.
  - Recognize what triggers your motivation and conversely what shuts it down.
  - Learn to listen for and identify these innate qualities in yourself and others during simple conversations.
  - Develop influencing language to match their motivational preferences.
- Establish rapid rapport and build trust.
- **Conversational discovery questions to unlock their motivation**: Listen to their specific context & language they use when answering your question. **Specific context is king!**
  - What do you want in your work? (context)
  - What’s important to you in your work? (context)
- **Confirmation follow up questions to refine their answer**
  - What will having that do for you?
  - Why is having that important?

---

**Put the Two Faces of New Year’s Goal Setting to Work**

**Take a look at the answers you just wrote on your paper**
- Circle some of the specific language that we’ve mentioned.
- In this context, what is the balance of “towards” and “away from” language that you’ve written yourself?
- What have you now learned about what preference you have for being motivated in this context?
- What assumptions have you made in your life about what really drives your motivation?
- When can you recall a time when a motivational mismatch that created immense stress?

---

**Listen and Unlock**
- Listen to the specific language you use when describing a task or goal? (Towards or Away From).
- Unlock: Unlock the meaning behind your own language and raise awareness of what motivates you (getting something or getting away from something).

---

**Decode and Understand**
- How does your motivation change with the specific context? (work, different aspects of work, play, hobbies or family)
- Understand there is no right or wrong. Becoming aware of your unconscious drivers for motivation will help you set yourself up for success and avoid stress / frustration.

---

**Connect and Influence**
- Once you understand your own motivations for goals then you can start to recognize them in others. You’ll be able to listen to their language and decode the meaning behind how they get and stay motivated for goals. Then your connection with them will feel more natural and welcomed. They will feel listened to and
understood, which will rapidly build trust and rapport between you.

• Create the most influence by matching your language to their chosen motivation. Example:
  - Away From: Use words that they use to match how they think of goal setting in the context. “Sam, I think you’re the best one on the team to help plan for the new product roll out. Share your list of problems you image could occur and the steps we need to take to avoid them.”
  - Towards: Use the words that someone who is moving towards a goal needs to hear to trigger motivation. “Sam, we need a comprehensive risk management program, I’d like you to lead the team and help us understand where the problems and risks are in our system.”

Sam, just like you and I can be motivated in both moving ‘Towards’ and moving ‘Away From’ depending on the specific context. We’re all a bit of both.

Having increased awareness of when and how you are motivated to achieve a goal will sustain your motivation now and in the New Year.

This new way of working with yourself and others will allow you to avoid the stressful motivational mismatches and better choose how to position yourself for success.

David Sollars is an owner / Director for Inuous, Ltd., a UK based consultancy that supports senior leaders and their teams who are responsible for driving change and transformation. Engaging teams with his brand of experiential layered learning for over 25 years, David facilitates leader’s re-design of how they work across an enterprise to deliver desired outcomes.

David brings a wide variety of experiences to his work including executive coaching for MIT’s Sloan Department of Executive Education and Harvard Business School, decades of integrative medical patient care, is a published author and has over 30 years of non-profit board leadership experience.

His consulting and coaching clientele include Unilever, Tesco, Sanofi, Schneider Electric, Elsevier, PTC Therapeutics, Roche Pharma, Campbell Properties, British Telecom, Honda of America, Merrimack Pharmaceuticals, ThoughtWorks, Bank of America, Merrill Lynch, Kimberly-Clark, Heineken USA and Philips.
Five Pitfalls of "NEW YEAR, NEW YOU" and How to Outsmart Them

Cynthia Ackrill, M.D.
“The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results.” — Albert Einstein
No one said figuring out how to live well is easy.

It’s that time of year when every media source inundates you with promises of foolproof ways to become a ‘New You in the New Year.’ Of course, these tantalizing offers are complete with urgency-ramping “deals” suggesting you should act now before the price goes up or all your friends get more organized, productive, happy, svelte and fit before you. But could all these promises of ‘New Year, New You’ actually make you feel worse and sabotage your goals?

Yes… what is intended to offer hope can leave you stressed or depressed, unless you do some important work before you start.

Of course, in my current sugar-overloaded, moderately S.A.D. state, I completely understand the allure of an easy-to-follow program that will make self-control or even self-actualization oh-so attainable! I can almost taste a “new” version of me — clear-headed, clean-eating, grounded, focused, fit, creative, productive model of a successful coach, speaker, consultant, not to mention loving and patient spouse, friend, mother, daughter, etc., etc., etc. Yeah, yeah… or I could just taste one more completely reliably leftover cookie!

So how can you (and I) leverage the freshness and hope of a new year to successfully make some intentional changes.

1 Change the premise: The current you is good now — yes, even if you have put on a few pounds, lost control of your organizational system, run adrift in the relationship department, missed a promotion, felt disenfranchised by this past year’s events, struggled with depression, or gotten off-track from your dreams, felt… Unless you do a little work to love the current you, you will be relying on your inner critic to motivate you with should haves and shame — a surefire recipe for failure.

You don’t have to be thrilled about your current situation, but you do have to have faith in yourself and your ability to use your strengths to create new behaviors.

If you do not feel like you are starting from a positive, empowered premise, then get some help to get there. Revisit your successes and your strengths. Ramp up your self-compassion — it’s powerful.

You don’t need a new you; you need the current you to feel strong and self-directed.

2 Beware of the marketing of magical thinking. We all want it to be easy. If I am honest, I don’t really want to change my behavior and stop eating cookies, I just want to feel energetic, lithe, and fit. I want the magic or insanity! But I know reality and so do you. You will have to change something to get a different result. And you can — with clarity, motivation, and support.

A new outcome requires new behaviors, choices, and habits, all of which require asking your brain to give up its easy, go-to pathways and build ones — new wiring for new habits. This is brainpower and effort intensive, so it really helps to be efficient, clear, and motivated… and set yourself up to be successful.

3 Get clear about what you really want. This sounds simple but can be quite tricky or easily skipped when the shiny, ‘New Year, New You’ beckons. Good programs or good coaches know this can be the most important step.

You may start focused on wanting to lose weight, when what you really crave is feeling more connected to what you are doing or to the people in your life. That shift in focus can truly empower you.

Picture yourself accomplishing your goals. What is that you want to feel? Why? Ask yourself why again. Again. Keep asking
until you dial down to your real goals and your real motivation. Use this clarity to set intentions — they are powerful.

4 Get clear why you want this. Again, go beyond the media promises, pat answers, inner critic thinking, and should have. They do not cut it in the long run. And you know by now that willpower is just not that powerful — darn it!

Feeling connected to your real “why” will give you the intrinsic motivation you need to finish strong when “muscling through” gets old. Revisit your values — what really drives you to be your best, to be strong? What has successfully motivated you in the past? What gives you the most deep down satisfaction? What helps you ignore distraction and temptation to stay focused on your intentions? Create reminders of your why everywhere.

5 Nurture yourself in every way. Behavior change requires a strong, energized mind and body. Do not make the mistake of focusing so hard on one aspect of your life at the expense of good general self-care. And never focus on deprivation — your mind and body will sabotage that approach! (Beware the denial time bomb as well!)

You have to take care of your physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual (connection/big picture) energy or something winds up out of whack — it’s the science of a human. If you are working on a productivity goal you’d better have the right building blocks in your brain. If you are changing your relationship with food, nurture it with the people and concerns that matter to you.

This does not mean you need to overhaul everything at once — NO!!! Small steps are the answer. But do check in with yourself more often. Be honest. Ask for what you need. Make a plan to handle stress. Think about the whole system you rely on to be healthy, happy, smart, and effective.

The New Year brings a feeling of new opportunity to clean out, clear up, or start fresh. You can leverage that feeling, but if you are not really ready, grounded, and clear, it is too easy to waste your precious time, money, and energy.

Take time to get clear about what you want for yourself in the year ahead and how you work, live and love best — there is no better investment in your future. Then carefully vet your choices to find the program, coach or system that will best support your success.

Reflection gives you access to your hard-earned wisdom. Proceed wisely, grounded in your values, using your unique strengths, connected to what matters to you. Set intentions and revisit them every day. Stay curious. Get creative. Practice calm. Laugh often. Exercise compassion. Connect more. Celebrate all wins.

And never, ever hesitate to reach out for support, encouragement, or direction. No one said figuring out how to live well is easy. Luckily humans are wired to be more successful together.
Help us reduce the negative impact of stress in our world as we work together to extend our reach into the public to ENGAGE, EDUCATE and EMPOWER the global community with science based stress management information, tools and techniques, so we can live more peaceful, happier, healthier and longer lives.

Obtaining credentials from The American Institute of Stress is a designation that sets members apart and reflects their commitment to the advancement of innovative and scientifically based stress management protocols.

**Join today and receive these two valuable gifts:**

- *Body Electric: Electroceuticals and the Future of Medicine*, a documentary film aimed to revolutionize the way we think about health and the human body

- *A Personal Appraisal of Hans Selye and the Origin of the American Institute of Stress*, an eBook by Paul Rosch, MD, FACP

Memberships starting at $45/year.
Become a member today at stress.org.
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A documentary film to revolutionize the way we think about health and the human body

The American Institute of Stress is an executive producer of Body Electric: Electroceuticals and the Future of Medicine, a documentary film aimed to revolutionize the way we think about health and the human body. This 68 minute movie, by British producer/director/writer Justin Smith, is available online and on DVD for purchase through AIS.

Members stream for free at stress.org
Click here to buy the DVD for $29.95
Improve your work-life balance: a possible New Year’s resolution
When I first entered the world of work about 45 years ago, the boundaries between work and home life were fairly clear. This is no longer the case and hasn’t been for quite some time. In today’s world, work is likely to invade your personal life and maintaining a healthy work-life balance is far from being a simple task. To succeed in this task, it’s essential to set boundaries between our work life and our personal life, so that we can achieve and maintain a good balance. Failure to do so can result in high levels of stress and possibly burnout; i.e. a state of feeling mentally and physically exhausted, devoid of motivation, and without much to offer.

What’s Work-Life Balance?

There is no universally agreed definition of work-life balance and no perfect, one-size-fits-all balance we should strive for. The best work-life balance strategy will differ from individual to individual, based on their personal priorities.

The key is figuring out where your priorities lie and coming up with a way to fulfil both your personal needs as well as your professional ambitions, to avoid having a work-life conflict. Work-life balance is about effectively managing the juggling act between paid work and the other activities that are important to you, for example, family time, participation in community activities, voluntary work, and personal development.

It’s important to acknowledge that work-life balance is not static; it changes for individuals over time and will mean different things to different people. Therefore, what might have been relevant for an employee at 25 years old, might not meet their needs necessarily when they are 35 years old, or 55. Individuals change as they go through the life course, and their needs differ as well.

In the context of ‘work-life balance’ ‘life’ refers to everything outside of normal paid work. However, it’s not as simple as this because in the real world today there is often a blurring of the boundary between paid work time and time outside paid work. Many people work at home and often non-work-related activities are carried out at work unknownst to an individual’s employer.

Organizations that employ staff have an important role to play in providing supportive, healthy work environments for employees who are striving to better balance their work life and personal life. Work-life balance initiatives are often viewed as being relevant only for big companies and organisations. This shouldn’t be the case. Many small businesses and their employees can also potentially benefit from such initiatives.

Work-Live Imbalance, Stress and Health

If an individual’s work life and personal life are out of balance, they may be experiencing very high levels of stress that...
could adversely affect their health. Having too many ongoing obligations that require energy, time, commitment, and other internal resources, can lead to burnout. Several studies have shown that long working hours are bad for one’s health, with adverse effects on cardiovascular and mental health. Conversely, flexible working hours and schedules that employees have more control over have been shown to have beneficial effects on stress levels, health and well-being. Despite this, a large proportion of today’s workforce still has a poor work-life balance. In addition, they tend to sleep less than workers did a generation ago. The damaging effects of this combination of factors include a higher risk of stroke, coronary heart disease, and mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression. Some studies have demonstrated that individuals who work more than 55 hours per week have a 1.3 times greater risk of having a stroke, than those who work standard hours.

Signs and Personal Consequences of Poor Work-Life Balance

The telltale signs of a poor work-life balance include the following:

• You’ve neglected taking care of your physical health e.g. your staying up too late and not getting enough quality sleep, you have a poor diet and you’re not exercising regularly.

• Your mental health has suffered. You may have become anxious, depressed, irritable, angry, have mood swings, and your possibly experiencing suicidal ideation.

• Your work feels meaningless and you don’t feel a connection with your colleagues or clients.

“By working faithfully eight hours a day you may eventually get to be boss and work twelve hours a day.”
— Robert Frost (1874-1963), American poet
• You feel overwhelmed because you can’t take time off without getting calls, texts and emails from work. You feel like you’re expected to be available almost 24/7.
• Regardless of how much you do, it feels like it’s never enough. You worry constantly about your job performance. You may even fear being fired.
• You feel lonely and isolated from the real world. Although constantly connected electronically, you no longer have much opportunity for meaningful ‘face-to-face’ interactions with family and friends.

The above telltale signs can be accompanied by the following personal consequences:
• You feel fatigued and this might adversely affect your ability to think clearly and work productively.
• Your health has suffered because stress has adversely affected your immune system and/or worsened the symptoms you experience from another medical condition.
• You’ve lost spending precious time with family, loved ones and friends.
• More is expected of you. If you regularly work extra hours, you might be given more responsibilities and tasks.

Business Benefits of Work-Life Balance or Well-Being Initiatives

Employees in the UK who have implemented ‘family friendly’ or ‘work-life balance’ policies have reported significant business benefits. These include:
• Increased productivity
• Improved employee morale, motivation and commitment
• Improved recruitment and staff retention
• Lower rates of absenteeism
• An improved customer experience

In July last year the Boston, MA based Forbes Coaches Council (FCC) reported the following:

• A growing number of U.S. businesses are shifting focus from employee wellness programs to well-being initiatives.
• These initiatives are more comprehensive health and productivity programs that tackle elements such as the workforce’s emotional and mental health, social connectivity, financial education, sense of fulfilment on the job, and many other aspects.
• Workplace health and well-being programs not only have a positive impact on employees’ wellness, they can also lead to a significant increase in team engagement, cohesiveness and overall productivity.
• According to research, a healthy and happy workforce can reduce costs by more than $1,600 per employee, with reduced leave days caused by disability or unplanned sickness.

The FCC also recommended 14 ‘employee well-being initiatives’. You may access these via the link below:

Interestingly, in June this year, the American Psychological Association published a report titled ‘2018 Work and Well-Being Survey.’ This report indicates that corporate America has
significant scope to capitalize on employee well-being initiatives.

**Among the report’s conclusions were:**

- Employees need the support of an organizational culture with workplace practices that allow them to recover from stress and function at their best on and off the job.
- Almost a third said their workload makes it difficult to take time off.
- About a quarter reported that they worry they’ll miss important information or opportunities when they take vacation time.
- About 1 in 5 said they avoid taking time off because they feel guilty when they do and might be seen as less committed to their job.
- 4 out of 5 reported that they are in good physical and mental health.
- Almost 3 in 10 reported that they intend to seek employment outside of the company within the next year.
- Only 4 in 10 said they regularly participate in employer-provided wellness programs.

You may access this report via the link below:


**How about a New Year’s resolution to improve your work-life balance?**

It’s the time of the year again when most of us start contemplating what our New Year’s resolution(s) will be. Whether you’re a fan of making New Year’s resolutions or not, when it comes to trying to improve your work life balance, having a resolution to do so, would be a good starting point.

Achieving balance (or a better balance) will involve comparing the needs and wants of your professional life with your personal and family life and making decisions about how to ‘juggle’ competing interests. It’s easy to give all or too much to your career. The following are some guidelines to help you with these difficult choices:

1. **Clarify your values.** — Your values are the things that are important to you; i.e. what you truly care about. Your values might include health, success, wealth, happiness, family, helping others, friendship, freedom, religion; to name but a few.

2. **Prioritize your values.** — Make a list of your top 5 values. This essentially represents the person you want to be.

3. **Analyse how you spend your time now.** — Are you currently allocating your time in accordance with your values?

4. **Develop a life plan.** — This involves envisioning the life you want and setting
personal goals. These goals could relate to spending time with the family, exercising, community involvement, etc. Developing a life plan requires considerable thought. The plan should be put in writing. Having a clear understanding of your values, together with a life plan, facilitates making the tough choices necessary to balance your professional and personal life. Living in harmony with your values reduces stress and provides a sense of meaning and fulfilment.

Having developed your plan, the crucial next step is to make it happen. To quote Michael Jordan: “Some people want it to happen, some wish it would happen, others make it happen.”

The following are some suggestions to help you stick to your resolution so that it can become a reality:

- Remember that you can resolve to make positive changes at any time, not just at the beginning of a new year.
- Instead of trying to shake off ingrained bad habits, resolve to adopt a good new behaviour.
- Be reasonable with yourself in relation to what you aim to achieve.
- If you don’t succeed, don’t blame yourself. Instead, determine the obstacles that blocked you and try again.
- Monitor your ‘self-talk’ and counter negative self-talk with positive self-talk.
- Tackle the process of improving your work-life balance one step at a time.
- Develop coping strategies to deal with obstacles and problems that may arise.
- Consider forming a support network of family and/or friends who will encourage and support you in sticking to your resolution.
- Be aware that adopting new habits and behaviours takes time and don’t be discouraged by this.
- Rather than just focusing on the end goal of your resolution, try focusing on the process; i.e. the means by which you will achieve your goal.
Self-calming for Self-actualization

(Reducing our National Attention Deficit)
Our National Attention Deficit: Impulsive adults; In her New York Times bestseller, Becoming Wise, Krista Tippett, laments that in America, many features of national public life are better suited to adolescence than to adulthood.

She then provides a reason for this reckless impulsivity — We don’t do things adults learn to do, like CALM OURSELVES. (2017, page 12).

The role of self-calming in reducing our national attention deficit (i.e. reckless impulsivity) according to the Centers for Disease Control, there has been an alarming 42% increase in Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder diagnosis in eight years (from 2003 to 2011). (Legg 2018). Stress is the leading trigger for ADHD symptoms (Porter, University of Illinois, College of Medicine 2016). Self-calming may reduce our growing National Attention Deficit.

Self-Calming and Self-Actualization

If we are ever going to mature into a society of self-actualized individuals, we will need to spend some effort on learning to self-calm. According to Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs, stress is non-conductor of psychological growth. https://www.learning-theories.com/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs.html. Being in a continual (and unrealistic) fight or flight mode stunts our psychological growth.

Self-calming is a step on the path to become the best version of ourselves.

Benefits of Adult Self-Calming

Self-calming leads to self-improvement — an added value in relationships, home, school and even work.

In addition to better problem-solving, relaxing under your control, will generate creative ideas.

“Gather the facts then relax” is a proven method used by the world’s most creative geniuses (e.g. Einstein dreamt – what would it be like to travel at the speed of light).

It is this author’s belief that mindfulness begets thoughtfulness.

The Movement Toward Teaching Self-Calming

Acknowledging the key importance of emotional self-control, the entire New York public school (July 2018) has mandated mental health curriculum beginning at Kindergarten. (© 2017, Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc https://mhanys.org/mhanys/). The American Institute of Stress (stress.org) recognized the key role of self-calming to healthy whole-person development in 1978, and today provides a peer reviewed clearing-house for virtually every aspect of stress management.

Meditation – Mainstream for Self-Calming

Putting our money where our mouth is! — Over 18 million Americans spent a billion dollars last year trying to calm down – naturally. Meditation, while not mainstream, is now a medically rec-
recognized form of heart healthy relaxation, even by the American Heart Association, (2017 *Journal of the American Heart Association.* ) Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR – Dr. Kabat-Zinn) is the most trusted name in Meditation. Dr. Heidi Hanna (2018 *The American Institute of Stress* [stress.org]) even offers a “recharging” “Meditation Monday” exercise – on line. (Monday is the most stressful day of the workweek.)

**The ABC’s Approach to Stress Resiliency**

You are invited to try these self-calming approaches to your personal “Attitudes, Breathing Techniques and Choices.”

**Attitudes – for Maximized Mindset**

Consider this: If you are not in control of your thoughts, who or what else is?

A lighthouse beacon for positive attitudes –

The very wise Maya Angelou is quoted as saying: If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude.

Maya Angelou [https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/maya_angelou](https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/maya_angelou)

Maya Angelou most importantly stated: “Be present in all things and thankful for all things.”

**Laugh it off –**

Humor is considered a great way to put things in perspective. Your sense of humor is your sense of balance. Check into The Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor (AATH) [https://www.aath.org/](https://www.aath.org/)

**Breathing Easier**

The Key to Stress Management is Right Under Your Nose!

As far back as 1880 the famed Harvard Psychologist William James believed that physiological phenomenon gave rise to the emotions.

Dr. Andrew Weil, M.D., Harvard-trained physician and best-selling author, strongly advocates concentrating on your breathing for five minutes per day to lower
stress and blood pressure. In fact, he states that relaxation breathing is the single best treatment for anxiety disorders.

Scientists have now discovered that nose-breathing increases a calming nitrous oxide (NO).

A tip for Better Breathing
Smell the Roses (aka. Aroma therapy) “Smelling scents” promotes slow deep, breathing through your nose. Deep breathing is relaxed breathing. The aroma of baking cookies actually increases the curb appeal of homes for sale, by relaxing potential buyers.

Choice – Win / Lose – You Choose:

“Plans are of little importance, but planning is essential.” – Winston Churchill

The key to sustainable stress resilience is to be pro-active, not impulsively reactive.

Your Freedom to CHOOSE
Choice is the C in the ABC’s of Industrial-Strength Stress Control formula. Within reason, we have freedom of choice in how we handle problems. Consciously choosing how we handle hassles frees us from the involuntary stranglehold of stressors.

Even for physical health, it is estimated that 60% of our health outcomes hinge on our personal life style choices. Get control of what you can – time management, cardiovascular fitness, sleep, diet, vacations, negative people, the company you keep etc.

The best way to manage stress – is to “nip it in the bud” as a local North Carolinian Sheriff famously quipped.

In the end, my friend, a guaranteed self-calming “mantra” is “left foot, right foot, breathe.”


Dr. Rubenzer is a school psychologist and the author of How to Best Handle Stress: Your First Aid Kit. He does private testing, SAT prep, and stress management at Triad Counseling and Clinical Services in Greensboro, North Carolina.

A streamlined (only 84 pages, easy-to-read, easy-to-do) version of How the Best Handle Stress: Your First Aid Kit is now available at Amazon.com for only $6.95. https://amzn.to/2QY6UZk


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