

JUDICIAL RETREAT 2014

METHODOLOGIES  
FOR MANAGING STRESS



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“Being in control of your life and having realistic expectations about your day-to-day challenges are the keys to stress management, which is perhaps the most important ingredient to living a happy, healthy and rewarding life.”

*Marilu Henner*

Is the pursuit of Happiness our raison d’etre?

*(United States Declaration of Independence 1776)*

The methodologies that we will discuss and practise for managing stress will involve our pursuing an inner core of principles, perceptions, and acting based upon these. We will practise personal productivity skills, physical activities, present moment awareness, balancing your life, conflict resolution skills, journaling and meditation.

In our pursuit of happiness and success, we will make decisions and follow through on being stress-free.

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Place an x to indicate where you stand with regard to the statements that follow.

		AGREE	DISAGREE	NOT SURE
1	Anxiety and stress are normal.			
2	Stress is a state of tension that makes a tough situation worse.			
3	The stress response involves the nervous system and specific hormones in the body enhancing its ability to perform under pressure.			
4	Ongoing and excessive stress are not problematic: this merely depletes your reserves and weakens your immune system.			
5	Stress can be caused by events that are pleasing.			
6	People feel nervous or jumpy when they are stressed.			

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# STRESS

## DEFINITION

Stress is a state of tension related to your body attempting to cope with its environment; it's the body's way of preparing to meet a tough situation. Anxiety is a sense of apprehension, dread and/or uneasiness. We tend to perceive anxiety and stress as negative, but in fact both are normal and can be adaptive. The stress response involves the nervous system and specific hormones in the body, and it enhances the ability to perform under pressure as well as avoid danger. It is when stress is excessive or on-going and interfering with functioning that anxiety and stress become a problem. This can lead to wearing out the body's reserves and leaving a person feeling depleted or overwhelmed, weakening the immune system and making it harder to cope with daily demands. The first step is to learn to recognize when you are stressed, the next is to find a way to deal with stress.

## CAUSE

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Stress can be caused by events that are pleasing as well as events that create crisis in our lives. Change causes stress—good change or bad change; it does not make a difference. When change occurs we usually experience some level of stress. For example, the birth of a baby can create stress. Trying to fulfil the requirements of your case manager can be stressful. Getting married or planning a birthday party for a family member can cause stress. Anything that causes us to have a physical or emotional reaction can create stress.

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## Common symptoms of stress and/or anxiety, that you may or may not have experienced.

		OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
1	trouble catching your breath			
2	going home at night exhausted and anxious			
3	butterflies in your stomach			
4	sweaty and/or trembling hands			
5	feeling lightheaded			
6	feeling nervous or jumpy			
7	feeling overwhelmed			
8	feeling tired all the time			
9	more work to be done and not a glimmer of increased job satisfaction			
10	constant pressure to work at optimum levels, intolerable			
11	having trouble concentrating			
12	irritability and moodiness irritable and harsh with my family			
13	headaches			
14	driven by unconscious habits and thought patten			
15	problems sleeping			
16	someone in authority set expectations that are too high, unrealistic and impossible to achieve			
17	feeling sad or depressed			



**Think of a very stressful situation you have been going through or went through in the last few years.**

- What did you feel like?
- What were your thoughts?
- What did you do about it?

What would you do differently in the future?

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**Did you avoid, alter, adapt, or accept?**

**Complete this Word Match as you consider.**

N

WORD	
Compromising	Needs of both groups are good and important
Avoidance	Helps all groups reach basic goals and keeps up good relationships
Accommodating	Loves to argue
Win/lose	Non-argumentative
Problem-solving	Agreeable, non-assertive

**Are your reactions to stress largely**

**Physical** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mental** \_\_\_\_\_

**Emotional or** \_\_\_\_\_

**Behavioural?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Put an x to indicate where you are on each continuum.**

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## SOMATIC EXPERIENCING

Do you ignore your body or avoid thinking about how your body is responding to stress?

Try Somatic Experiencing: Becoming aware and focusing on your bodily sensations gets you in touch with the tension and lets your survival releasing instincts take over.

Somatic experiencing takes advantage of the body's unique ability to heal itself. The focus is on bodily sensations, rather than thoughts and memories about the traumatic event. By concentrating on what's happening in your body, the physiological effects, you gradually get in touch with stress and trauma-related energy and tension. From there, your natural survival instincts take over, safely releasing this pent-up energy through shaking, crying, and other forms of physical release

### **Are you too busy working to focus on your own thoughts?**

Cognitive-behavioral processing helps you process and evaluate your thoughts and feelings about any stress and trauma you are experiencing.

What problematic beliefs are feeding any negative thoughts and behaviours?

### **Cognitive-behavioral processing**

- Requires you to think about you; to spend time and effort analyzing your thoughts and feelings.
- Such self-analysis can be difficult, but it is a great way to learn more about how your internal states impact outward behaviour.

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- helps you develop coping skills that can be useful both now and in the future by using strategies e.g. journaling, role-playing, relaxation techniques, and rational self-counselling and co-counselling skills as in the **Gift of Listening**.
- **Socratic questioning** e.g. "How do I really know that those people are laughing at me?" "Could they be laughing about something else?"
- **Inductive method** to find out the facts.

**Based on clearer information, we then practise new ways of reacting/ behaving.**

### **Please Listen**

When I ask you to listen to me  
and you start giving me advice,  
you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me  
and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way,  
you are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me  
and you feel you have to do something  
to solve my problem,  
you have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen!  
All I ask is that you listen.  
Don't talk or do - just hear me.  
Advice is cheap – 2 dollars will get you  
several sets of advice in the same newspaper.  
And I can do for myself; I am not helpless.  
Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.

When you do something for me that I can  
and need to do for myself,  
you contribute to my fear and inadequacy.  
But when you accept as a simple fact  
that I feel what I feel, no matter how irrational,

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then I can stop trying to convince you  
and get about this business of understanding  
what's behind this irrational feeling.  
And when that's clear, the answers are obvious  
and I don't need advice.  
Irrational feelings make sense  
when we understand what's behind them.

Perhaps that's why prayer works - sometimes -  
for some people, because God is mute.  
and he doesn't give advice or try to fix things.  
God just listens and lets you work it out for yourself.

So please listen, and just hear me.  
And if you want to talk,  
wait a minute for your turn,  
and I will listen to you.

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## My Intrinsic Qualities: I Am and You are



*Remember these are intrinsic qualities of everyone.*

*Some are manifested more than others at a particular time.*

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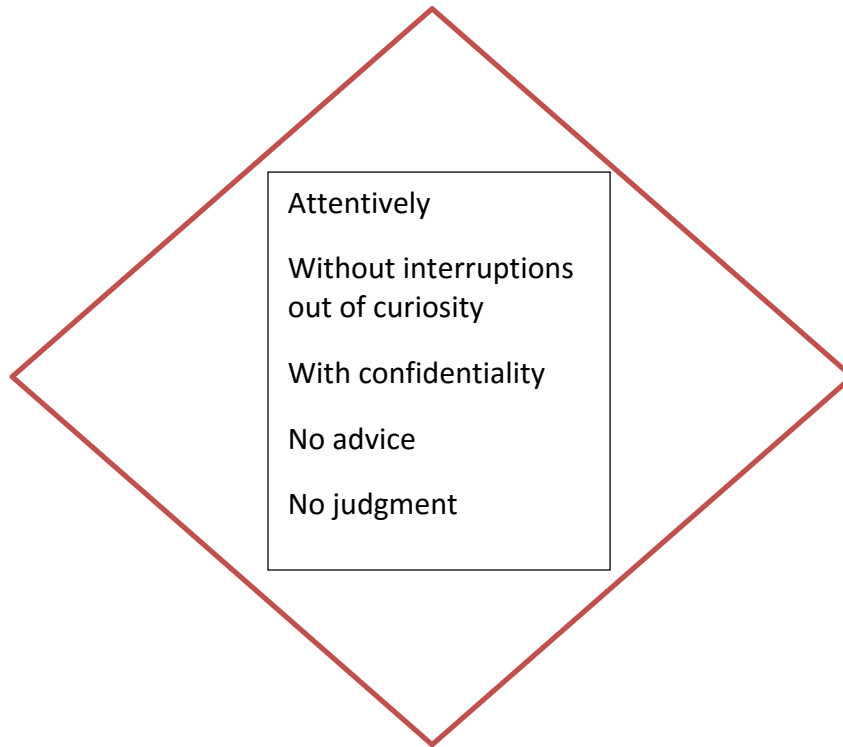
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## THE GIFT OF LISTENING

**How do you like to be listened to in an affective encounter and take the opportunity to do some Cognitive-Behavioral processing?**



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**ACTIVITY 3:** In pairs, give the other the gift of listening. You may **speak on anything in the past that matters to your mind, body and spirit and therefore your stress level.**

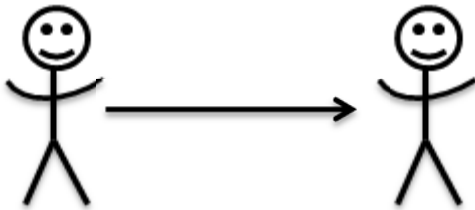
- Break the isolation.
- Agree on the length of time each would speak to the other: same time for each. At the end of the time, affirm the other. Speak her name. Contradict the negative and reinforce the positive. Remind her of 1 or 2 of her relevant intrinsic qualities.
- Do not refer to her material after the session, even to her. Maintain strict confidentiality.

*“The first duty of love is to listen.”*  
-Paul Tillich

### How does affective listening work?

A listens to B

A affirms B



B listens to A

B affirms A

**HOMEWORK:** Teach the gift of listening to your personal partner and your professional partner.

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## METHODOLOGIES FOR MANAGING STRESS



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“ Next to love, balance is the most important thing”

John Wooden

**1. PERSONAL PRODUCTIVITY SKILLS** - Read a good book, Work on a hobby, Play an instrument. Laugh more.

**TASK: Laugh** – Turn to your partner , remember a joke and laugh – you could share the joke afterwards.

What you do and what goes into you – what you eat - Be aware of the foods you eat. Some foods with hydrogenated fat, sugar, caffeine, nicotine, salt and additives can contribute to stress.

**TASK:** Share with your neighbour one food among these that you will definitely not give up!

## **Plan**

### **Establishing priorities and being well organized can relieve stress.**

Consider making a list of tasks that are critical and tackle them in order of importance and urgency. If you have something particularly onerous to accomplish, put it at the top of your list and complete it quickly. Once it is done, the biggest part of the pressure is gone.

- Breaking projects into small steps is also a stress reducer. When a large project seems crushing, develop a step-by-step action plan. Focus on nailing one step at a time, rather than trying to “eat the whole elephant at once”.
- Delegate responsibility and lighten your burdens with the help of team members who are happy to assist. Seek *win-win gains* with fellow employees, clients and vendors. Be willing to compromise when it makes sense.

### **Good time management is a powerful tool to reduce stress and encourage a balanced life.**

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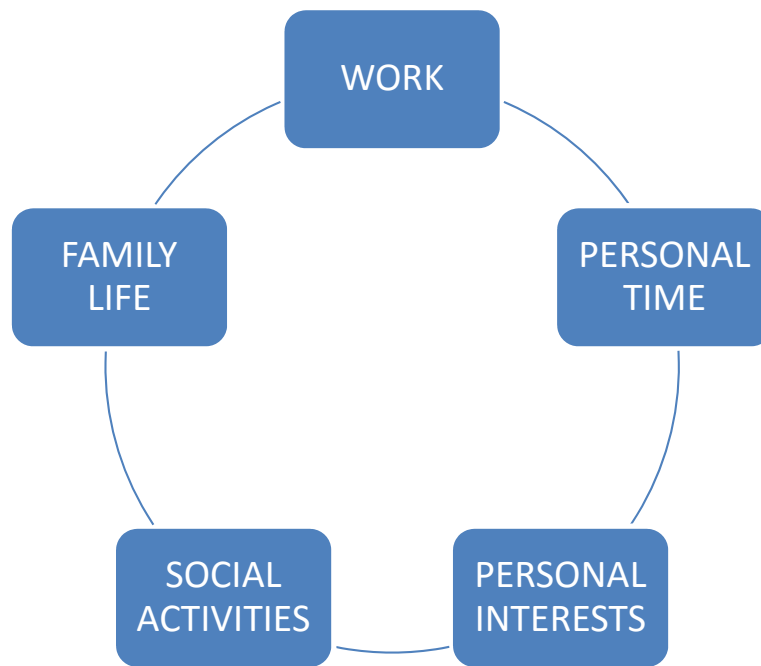
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**TASK:** Check your diaries regarding the week you return from this conference.

- Consider developing a balanced schedule that allows you to analyze time, responsibilities, and daily tasks. Work to achieve balance in work, personal time, family life, social activities and personal interests. This effort requires lines in the sand that won't be crossed.
- Are you ruthless enough in your own self interest? Body, Mind and Spirit?. Avoid over-committing to anyone. Avoid scheduling too much into the space of a day.



## 2. PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

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## **Maintain balanced diet and sleep cycle as much as possible**

**Exercise.** Taking a walk is the easiest and most effective means of reducing stress. But do what you planned to – water aerobics? cycling? yoga? bicycling? – but from now.

**TASK:** Arrange it this evening – email who you need to and put it in your diary. We know about procrastination and putting yourself last!

### **3. PRESENT MOMENT AWARENESS – of my mind, body and spirit**

Take time to think and relax.

Commit to something personally meaningful and important every day.

Listen to music. Pleasure yourself with art.

Add the element of active feedback into your practice

Take a mental health day and spend time with yourself or with friends ( don't take your laptop, Kindle, i-pad, tablet, smart phone or google glasses with you.

Dance like no one's looking. Enjoy the moment. If you are in a wheelchair do a sit-down dance, raise your hands and smile at your neighbour.

**TASK:** Dance madly -(but not in the conference room now).

Live in the present: appreciate where you are right now. Live in a spirit of gratitude.

**TASK: What 2 good things have happened so far today?**

### **4. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SKILLS**

**Conflict** is a serious disagreement or argument. It exists when one person has a need of the other and that need is not being met. What is it that you need? What do you need in a work relationship?

Conflict Management is a process of attempting to manage and resolve a dispute or a conflict.

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Who is your **support system**? Think of 2 persons you know - friends or family that you trust and can talk about problems you have or decisions that you must make. Important to build your support system.

Develop your **communication skills** so that your communication is honest, direct, and respectful of yourself and others. Honest but kind. Kind but not a floor cloth. Assertive but not aggressive.

## ASSERTIVENESS

ACTIVITY: *Circle* your level of assertiveness in your personal life and *underline* your level of assertiveness in your professional life.

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Am I passive?                  Passive aggressive?                  Assertive?                  or                  Aggressive?

Assertiveness is situational.

### **Formula for Assertiveness:**

- Describe your feelings.
- Describe the other's action.
- Tell why you feel this way.
- Express the desired behavior in a SMART way.

e.g. *"I feel terrible when you ignore me in public because we are supposed to be close. I wish you would walk next to me, listen to my ideas and stay and speak with me."*

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ACTIVITY : Look at the current conflict you have and write an assertive statement to that person.

Note: Nothing that could be interpreted as insulting is included.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**TASK:** Have you ever had to get rid of the services of someone in your employ at home or work? How did you do it? What did you say? How did you feel?



*The capacity for hope is the most significant fact of life. It provides human beings with a sense of destination, and the energy to get started.*

Norman Cousins,

**TASK: Pathways/ Options:** Who do you have a little or big conflict with? Identify areas of agreement and disagreement and look for options, several options to resolve the conflict in a win/win solution.

Practice seeing options and resources that can be used to solve problems- even when the problem is not yours directly. **For practice, think of what you can do, what options there are** or can be to solve the problem of our mis-educating our young

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men (and women) and initiating them into criminal lives – white collar and otherwise.  
Take 1 minute to practise with your neighbour.

- Stress leaves when everyone has clear and concise information on the operations of the work in hand eg the criminal system. Invite honesty and transparency about the challenges.
- Define roles and responsibilities and to allow others ( and you) to have a voice in decisions on scheduling, workloads, deadlines and rules that will affect key outcomes.
- Stress in the workplace minimized with the provision of opportunities for career development and enforcement of a zero-tolerance policy for harassment.
- Be guided by your organizational values. At your finger tips?

## Organisational vs personal Values?

efficiency	faithfulness	health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• justice</li><li>• forgiveness</li><li>• family</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• sexual fulfillment</li><li>• adventure</li><li>• integrity</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• wealth</li><li>• salvation</li><li>• ambition</li></ul>

5. **JOURNALING – DIARY** – not only for scheduling and noting what was actually done but for jotting down our brilliant ideas, our philosophical thoughts, what might turn out

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to be break-thros!- and for ridding ourselves of negative thoughts we would rather not tell the person! Trace your process to more positive thinking.

6. **PRAY, MEDITATE**, listening to relaxing guided imagery; to quiet your mind and body

**TASK:** Close your eyes for a minute and visualise your favourite peaceful scene-somewhere with plenty greens and blues.

Practise informal **hands-on healing** – Reiki is what the Japanese call the initiated form. Do palming; cover your eyes with your hands

**Breathe** deeply and use breathing exercises to relieve anxiety, depression, irritability, and fatigue.

**A little relaxation meditation:**

Close your eyes

become aware of your breath – in and out

Think of each part of your body relaxing. Your eyebrows, your eyes, your ears, your forehead, your tongue, your throat, your shoulders, your wrist, your fingers, your legs, your knees, your calves, your feet, your toes.

Notice your breath and relax into it.

Any thought that come notice them and let them go without judgement

Come back to the breath - Relax more deeply into the breath

Release thoughts as they come

Relax into this state

Focus on the breath

Feel completely relaxed

Come back to sensations in your body moving your hands and legs gently

Come back to your breath

Slowly open your eyes

7. **HOPE**

**Be an optimist.** Be positive. When you can manage to do

this, stress flies away. Eliminate self-defeating behavior.

Negative thoughts exacerbate pressures and reduce your

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energy, hope and motivation. Don't allow your mind to dwell on what you can't personally repair. Rather, fix your attention on what you can *control and improve*.

Snyder (1999) characterized hopeful thinkers as people who are able to establish clear goals, imagine multiple workable pathways/ options toward those goals, and persevere, even when obstacles get in their way.

Hope and forgiveness are healthy. Snyder found that hopeful thinking is one of the biggest determinants of success - more so even than intelligence, skill or previous success - so it's an attribute that we could all benefit from having more of. Be optimistic – in the midst of everything.

Namaste.

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