

THE FIVE PILLARS

2025



Stress

is practically impossible to avoid. However, we wouldn't want to avoid it entirely:

The right amount of stress (called eustress) gives us positive energy and motivation to live life well and deal with the challenges we face. Not being stressed at all can be a sign of boredom, or a disconnection from ourselves. The vast majority of people experience too much negative stress: the kind that can lead to distress, burnout and even breakdown.

It can impact our health (physical and mental), relationships and career. To get to that optimum level of eustress, it is useful to look at the root cause and solutions within The Five Pillars. I came up with this years ago when I realised in working with so many stressed people, there were many factors involved. Because of this there are also many possible solutions to it. Symptoms of stress vary from person to person so a personalised approach is important.

Psychological

By this I mean your thoughts which, in turn, create your behavioural response to stress. We have numerous thinking patterns which can really fuel our stress response. These include, but are in no way limited to, catastrophising, all or nothing thinking, personalisation and the “shoulds”. Thoughts are your mind’s way of interpreting a situation but that is not to say that it is accurate. Thoughts include ideas, beliefs and opinions. By addressing negative thinking patterns, you can create perspective and insights that enable you to handle whatever is going on in a more helpful way for you. This does not mean you are “pretending” your way out of something – it’s important to face reality. But our thoughts are just thoughts and only have the power that you give them. Changing the way you think is powerful and liberating. If you want to find out more, check out my book *Think Positive, Feel Good: A Workbook to Transform Your Thinking* to help you change the way you think so you can reduce your levels of stress.



Emotional

These are your feelings and your emotional response to stress. Your feelings are usually triggered by your thoughts.



When we feel negative feelings such as fear, anger, guilt, loneliness, boredom, stress or sadness, many people distract from these feelings in ways that simply force them underground. This may feel like a great idea: who wants to feel bad? But all that happens is that the feeling simply comes back when your distracting activity stops. And they usually come back stronger and louder. Why? Because, far from being there to spoil your day, feelings are there as a signal for you that something isn’t right and for you to take appropriate action. If you find yourself reaching for things like food, alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, social media and online shopping during times of stress, be sure that these are your distracting behaviours and they become incredibly addictive with often very negative consequences. Meanwhile your actual stressors remain. Becoming emotionally literate and responsive (rather than indulging the reactivity of distractions) are absolutely key to building resilience. Much of my work involves teaching these principles in a way that can be implemented into your lifestyle so you become more resilient, less stressed, more resourceful and more energised so you can enjoy the good times better.

Physical

This refers to nutrition and biology. I am a strong believer that the mind affects the body just as much as the body affects the mind. When we suppress our stress, it can manifest itself in physical symptoms such as suppressed immunity, digestive issues, migraines, etc. If we consider that food is medicine, the opposite can also be true. Too much junk food and ultra-processed foods can create or exacerbate illness.

They can also be extremely addictive. By seeing food as medicine, you can support good health, both mental and physical, as well as support a calm energy in a way which is sustainable and enjoyable. This pillar also refers to neurotransmitters which can impact your whole body system. Ones I am particularly interested in are dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin and endorphins – these improve mood when in balance. One of the problems with our society is that far too many of us are addicted to unhealthy dopamine. Examples include social media, video games, binge-watching TV, junk food, constant validation, gambling, porn, etc. Creating appropriate levels of dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin and endorphins are important to support stress-resilience and mental health.

I have an article on this on my website.

How to Boost Mood without Pills.

<https://www.youempoweredself.co.uk/19219-2/>

Another aspect of this pillar is good quality sleep. This is an absolute must for improving your levels of stress resilience. If you suffer from poor quality sleep, or wake up not feeling refreshed, this will significantly impact your ability to tolerate stress and solve problems, so creating even more stress. Good sleep hygiene, exercise and healthy eating can really help you.

I have a hypnosis recording which supports sleep called Sleep Well, available from my website www.youempoweredself.co.uk.

Lifestyle

This refers not only to lifestyle (how you live your life) but life-load (how busy your life is in terms of activities and responsibilities). Considering what and how much you do and whether it is in line with your goals, values and purpose (see the next pillar) is a useful activity to help you reduce your levels of stress. It is a function of what you say “yes” and “no” to. It requires clear boundaries to be both set and maintained (there is an art to this). It impacts your work-life balance and contributes to your levels of stress and/or resilience, as well as your relationships and health. Ask yourself: Do I have balance in my life? Where does it feel out of balance? Where am I saying “yes” when I want to say “no”? Where am I saying “no” when I want to say “yes”? How well am I managing my time? How well am I managing my energy? What do I need to make more room for in my life to feel that I have more balance? What do I need to do less of to achieve more balance? What seems to be missing in my life and how can I introduce it? What skills do I need to have to make these changes? Think in terms of boundaries, assertiveness, time management.



Spiritual

By this I mean having a sense of purpose and meaning in life. When you do, no matter what is happening, you feel stronger with a greater ability to transcend any negative stress. This is because life's problems seem smaller in comparison. It's also because you are focused on what's important to you rather than what's happening around you. Spiritual can also refer to a higher power: whether that be God, Buddha, Allah, The Universe, Nature, Grace your Higher Self, or some other representation of something greater than you.

It helps us feel supported and connected. In a world of such chaos, that can only be a good thing, right? But even if you don't believe in a higher power, having your own sense of purpose and meaning can really help you have perspective and focus so that you can live your life in a way that supports you, your highest good, happiness, fulfilment and resilience.

Conclusion

Stress can be caused by and resolved by looking at it through The Five Pillars: Psychological, Emotional, Physical, Lifestyle and Spiritual. When you address the cause rather than the symptoms, you can enjoy what I call The Five Foundations: Clarity, Skillset, Mindset, Stress Resilience, Health and Energy. With these, you can live a purposeful, fulfilling and enjoyable life with confidence.

Today's Author

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