

Unwind **online**

January 2019

The beginning of the year is a common time to set resolutions. Gym attendance often goes up while food consumption goes down...at least for a while. But if you're truly interested in self-development, don't limit your focus to just your body. Physical health is important, but so is your emotional and mental health.

Ann Wildz

It Begins With an A

Now that you have a better understanding of what stress is, you're ready to learn more about how to take back the power it steals from you. *(If you're just joining for the first time, you can learn more about stress [here](#).)*

There are many proven methods and skills to minimizing the negative effects of stress. One framework for organizing them is the ABCs. Stress management techniques will either:

- **Alter it** by making a change in your personal management skills to utilize your time and energy more effectively.
- **Avoid it** by changing the way you interact with those around you, or by changing your surroundings.
- **Accept it** via an active acceptance of situations outside of your control.
- **Build resistance** by creating a strong foundation of physical, mental, and spiritual health.
- **Change perspectives** by developing new ways to view your experience.

It's easy to learn the techniques, we'll cover a few in each newsletter and there are many resources readily available to explore them. The hard part is putting them into regular practice. The gap between knowledge and application in any area is motivation. Managing stress is no different. Until you're motivated to truly make a change, nothing will improve. I can help you gain the knowledge, but the rest of it, my friend, is up to you.

Build Resistance

Move That Belly

We may take it for granted, but the human body, and the systems supporting it, are truly remarkable. Sometimes, however, those systems work against us.

When the brain senses danger it sends messages throughout the body to prepare to fight or flee. But it responds the same whether the threat is real or perceived, such as when you're simply under stress.

One action is to redirect oxygen to the body parts best suited to counter the danger, like the arms and legs. But it does so at the expense of others, including the brain.

When you find yourself in one of life's stressful situations, what happens with your breathing can determine how well you manage the situation.

A useful tool to avoid losing your head is Belly Breathing, breathing in deeply enough to raise and lower your stomach.

To practice, place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly. Breathe in slowly, moving the air through your chest and down into your belly. Repeat often.

As shallow, chest-breathing is associated with heart-attack victims, developing the skill of deep, diaphragmatic breathing will not only help you manage your stress, it just may save your life.

Know your why, because your what has more power when you're walking in your purpose.

Michael Jr.

The Marks Left Behind

Have you ever noticed how quickly a glass door becomes marked? No matter how often it's cleaned, fingerprints and smudges will cover it again. Each person that passes through leaves their own mark on the door. Fingerprints can easily be removed, but the marks we leave on people's lives aren't so easily erased.

Have you ever thought about how much of an impact you actually have on those you interact with? Consider your own experience. How much of your day, and your mental outlook, is influenced by those you're around? Are you happiest when friends and family are upbeat and positive? Is your opinion of your job, along with your motivation, reduced when co-workers complain? Do you feel valued when your boss tells you that you did a great job on a project? Does your mood turn grumpy from other drivers on your daily commute?

Just as people leave their mark on you, you leave yours wherever you go. It's never a question of *if* you'll leave marks on the lives you pass throughout your day, but *what kind* of marks they'll be.

Change Perspective

Name 3 Good Things

Did you know that your brain has a built-in negativity bias? It's why you're more likely to remember the mean kid in 2nd grade stealing your lunch than playing a fun game of kick-ball on the same day.

Brain imaging shows greater levels of electrical activity when exposed to negative stimuli. This bias likely arose as an early self-protection system, but today it often hinders emotional health.

Positive Psychology, which studies the science behind emotional well-being, has found that people with a ratio of 3:1 positive to negative

emotions flourish in life. They have less stress, greater productivity, and live 8-10 years longer than those with lower ratios.

The **3 Good Things** exercise is a tool designed to help you retrain your brain. Simply reflect on each day and identify, either in writing or verbally, 3 good things that happened. You can even expand the exercise to answer why each good thing happened.

Neural pathways are built through repetitive thinking. The more you practice positivity, the faster you'll overcome brain bias. What we seek we tend to find, so seek the good.

Alter It

Planning to Fail?

As an author, printer, postmaster, scientist, musician, inventor, statesman, and diplomat, it's safe to say that Benjamin Franklin was highly productive. He was able to do many things because he actively managed his time. So much so, that he's often referred to as the father of time management.

In his twenties, on a long sea-voyage, he contemplated productivity and how to best attain it. He formulated a time block approach which defined certain hours of the day to different groups of tasks. It was a system he used regularly throughout his life.

But Franklin's focus wasn't limited to production. He also strove to live a life of value, a list of 13 that he specifically tracked daily. As part, he began each morning with the question, "What good shall I do this day?" And ended with, "What good have I done today?" As to his success, he said, "[T]ho' I never arrived at the perfection I had been so ambitious of attaining, but fell far short of it, yet I was, by the endeavour, a better and happier man."

When this new year comes to a close will you be, like Franklin, a better and happier version of yourself through endeavor? The time is yours to use as you will. But it's only what is intentionally pursued that's accomplished. Or as the adage often attributed to Franklin states, "Failing to plan is planning to fail."