

PATIENT



Stress Recovery Program

HANDBOOK

Introduction

Stress: Everyone experiences it at one time or another, but chronic high stress, and how that stress is perceived, can be detrimental to your physical and mental health. It can instigate feelings of anxiety and overwhelming fear. It can also weaken your health and immune system, leaving you susceptible to colds and flu, an increase in aches and pains, as well as many serious illnesses. Everyone's stress threshold is different, as are his or her reactions to it. Some people thrive on stress and find it positively motivating; others do not.

Outside of mental stress, additional burden can also be placed on the body's stress-response system by various lifestyle factors such as consuming a refined and nutrient-depleted diet, excessive amounts caffeine or alcohol, inflammation, or not getting enough sleep.

Your health care provider has recommended the ARK Stress Recovery Program because it contains strategies for you to begin the process of appropriately responding to stress. These tools can help you regain control of your life, allowing you to enjoy a restored, renewed and revitalized life of balance.

Stress reveals itself in many different ways. How is it affecting your life?

Are you easily overwhelmed by everyday tasks that were once a breeze?

Do you get angry over things that never used to bother you?

Have you gained weight around your mid-section?

Do you have difficulty falling or staying asleep?

Are you having trouble concentrating?

Do you crave foods you know are unhealthy for you?

Is your libido not what it once was?

Are you easily irritated on a consistent basis?

Are you restless and agitated?

Do you lack energy by the middle of the afternoon?

Are you relying on caffeine to make it through the day?

Are you drinking alcohol in order to relieve stress?

Do aches and pains linger longer than they once did?

If you identify with one to two of these statements, your body's ability to adapt to stress may be impaired. If you identify with three to four of these statements, your daily stress load may be overwhelming and significantly impacting your health.

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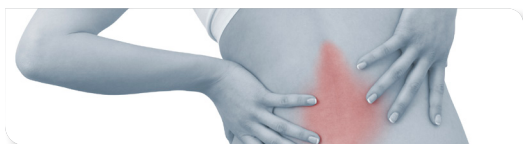
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Stress Recovery

Welcome to the ARK Stress Recovery Program. This guidebook was designed to help you bring your mind and body back into balance and eliminate the unhealthy effects of stress.

Each person's response to stress is unique and complex. The essential tools in this program are designed to be flexible as they help support each component of the stress response, allowing you to find the perfect balance that restores your vitality and optimal health.

This guide will also help you better understand how stress affects your health on a daily basis; including why your body responds, or fails to respond, to the stressful events in your life. Starting with the "Life Event Stress Inventory," you will discover the life events that can be the most stressful. Additionally, each chapter outlines recommendations for the four major factors that trigger a stress response in the body: *mental and emotional stress, insomnia, blood sugar imbalances and inflammation.*

Once you understand these basic principles, you will have the tools to control your stress response, rather than be controlled by the events and circumstances around you.

Figure 1

Life Stress Inventory

Life Event	Points	Score
Death of a spouse	100	
Divorce	73	
Marital Separation	65	
Detention in a jail or institution	63	
Death of a close family member	63	
Major personal injury or illness	53	
Marriage	50	
Being fired from work	47	
Marital reconciliation	45	
Retirement from work	45	
Major change in the health or behavior of a family member	44	
Pregnancy	40	
Sexual Difficulties	39	
Gaining a new family member (birth, adoption, older adult moving in, etc.)	39	
Major business adjustment	39	
Major change in financial situation (a lot worse or better off than usual)	38	
Death of a close friend	37	
Changing to a different line of work	36	
Major change in # of arguments w/spouse on core issues	35	
Taking on a mortgage (for house, business, etc.)	31	
Foreclosure on a mortgage or loan	30	
Major change in responsibilities at work (promotion, demotion, etc.)	29	
Son or daughter leaving home (marriage, attending college, joined military)	29	
Conflict or tensions with parents/in-laws	29	
Outstanding personal achievement	28	
Spouse beginning or ceasing work outside of the home	26	
Beginning or completing formal schooling	26	
Major change in living conditions (new home remodeling, deterioration of home)	25	
Change of personal habits (dress, quitting smoking, etc.)	24	
Conflict at work with employer or manager	23	
Major changes in working hours or conditions	20	
Changes in residence	20	
Changing to a new school	20	
Major change in usual type and/or amount of recreation	19	
Major change in church activity (a lot more or less than usual)	19	
Major change in social activities (clubs, movies, visting, etc.)	18	
Taking on a loan (car, TV, freezer, etc.)	17	
Major change in sleeping habits (a lot more or less than usual)	16	
Major change in number of family get-togethers	15	
Major change in eating habits	15	
Vacation	13	
Major holidays	12	
Minor violations of the law	11	

Take the Test

Use the Life Event Stress Inventory (**Figure 1**) to calculate how events in your life influence the amount of stress you experience. You might be surprised to find how many stress-contributing events are part of your life. Add up all your points to find your score.

A score of 150 points or less suggests a low amount of life change and a low susceptibility to stress-induced health breakdown.

Scores between 150 to 300 points imply about a 50 percent chance of a major health breakdown in the next two years.

A score of 300 points or more raises the odds of a major health breakdown in the next two years by about 80 percent.

Note : Risk of illness assessment. Adapted from "The Social Readjustment Scale," by T.H. Holmes and R.H. Rahe, 1967, *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 2, p.213. Copyright 1967 by Elsevier Science Inc.



Stress and Your Health

Your body was designed to respond to short bursts of stress, followed by long periods of rest and relaxation. In today's world, however, time to relax is considered a luxury, while stress levels are at an all-time high.

Stress is frequently referred to as "the silent killer"; it has been associated with the top six causes of death. According to the American Psychological Association, two out of three visits to the primary care doctor are for health issues where stress plays a significant role.

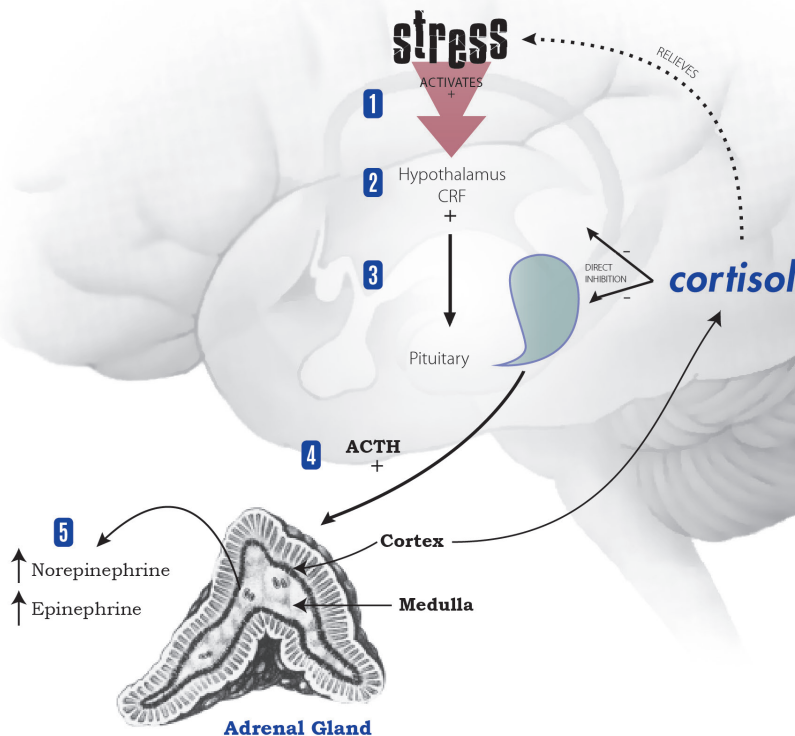
Your stress response system includes the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and the sympathetic nervous system (SNS). The HPA axis and SNS regulate your body's flight-or-fight response, which is important for producing an immediate response to danger, such as rescuing a child from a dangerous situation. The result of HPA and SNS activation is a heightened sense of awareness, an accelerated heart rate and rapid breathing. These normal responses to immediate danger help you quickly and appropriately respond to a potential threat.

A key component of the HPA axis includes the adrenal glands, the small (five grams) glandular tissues lying atop of each kidney. The adrenal glands are an extension of the SNS and are responsible for regulating the body's strength and stamina and are the central glands that release hormones and chemicals in response to stress. The two key hormones involved in regulating the stress response include cortisol and dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA). The adrenal glands also secrete the fight-or-flight chemicals, epinephrine (adrenaline) and norepinephrine.

The short-term release of cortisol and adrenaline into the bloodstream prepares the body for an essential and quick response to potential danger. Chronic stress causes a continuous release of cortisol and adrenaline into the bloodstream which can be damaging to the body if left unresolved.

The HPA axis coordinates stress response in the following manner:

- 1** The brain receives a signal in order to indicate to the rest of the body that a stressor is present. (The stressor may be immediate danger, mental or emotional stress, drop in blood sugar or inflammation).
- 2** Stress activates the hypothalamus (a gland in the brain) which begins the stress-response process by secreting corticotropin-releasing factor (CRF).
- 3** CRF stimulates the pituitary gland in the brain to release adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH) which travels through the blood stream until it reaches the adrenal glands.
- 4** ACTH causes the adrenal glands to release cortisol, resulting in: heightened awareness, increased blood sugar, rapid pulse and increased blood pressure, decreased immune defenses, decreased digestion, breakdown of bone to release calcium, and breakdown in muscle.
- 5** As part of the SNS response, the adrenal glands also release epinephrine (adrenaline), resulting in: increased heart rate, rapid breathing, and a state of hyper-vigilance.





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