



Deconstructing Stress

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Reduce Your STRESS Load

If you are like most people in this harried society, you sometimes feel like your own internal structure is starting to shake. Pressure from urgent deadlines, too many projects and too many people counting on you can eventually create serious stress. Stress is felt in your body as an actual physical, mental, and emotional consequence.

If you keep adding to the load without offloading something else, your internal structure will get overstressed and finally destabilize.

For over twenty years I have consulted with individuals, businesses, and couples who are starting to come apart because of an overwhelming load. They get one crisis or frustration too many and seek my help. We then figure out how much of the problem is an external situation, how much is interpersonal (poor communication, unresolved old issues), and how much originates inside each person.

Like my clients, you might find some of these strategies helpful for Deconstructing Stress:

- 1) ***Pay attention.*** It is easy to get so focused that you miss warning signals from yourself, your partner, or your co-workers that something has to give. Maybe you've lost your steam or your cool. You have to notice it before you can change it.



- 2) **Assess the situation.** Is this a case of too much pressure, or your diminished internal strength? Although they are interconnected and can both be going on, they are not the same.
- 3) **Consider your options.** If it's a matter of too much, what can you put down, delegate, or postpone? What is the worst-case scenario if you just said "Sorry, I can't" to the last straw somebody tries to hand you? (And be aware that the somebody may often be yourself.)

If there is nothing you can or will not put down, figure out how to take better care of yourself. Here are some possibilities:

- **Get more rest.** Establish some wind-down rituals and go to bed earlier.
- **Get light, enjoyable exercise.** Turn off your brain and *move*.
- **Have more fun.** Reserve a time to do something that has no redeeming social value but lightens your heart. Dance around the living room. Call up a friend and take in a movie.
- **Do something different.** Take a new class, volunteer, get a hobby, take a weekend trip.
- **Practice the relaxation response.** I often teach my coaching clients on the phone how to put themselves into a quiet, relaxed state.



- 4) ***Give yourself permission.*** Think of it this way. You know your car needs regular maintenance to keep going. If you cannot muster up enough self-love to want to nurture yourself, at least remember this: You are your best resource, and it is dumb to run yourself into the ground.
- 5) ***Choose and follow through.*** Discipline simply means remembering what is important.

If you have bought into the Superwoman Myth, give it up. You are more valuable than any To-Do list or project. If you want to live with passion, purpose, and pleasure, you have to decide what is really important.

Being at choice in your life is the most effective stress reducer of all!