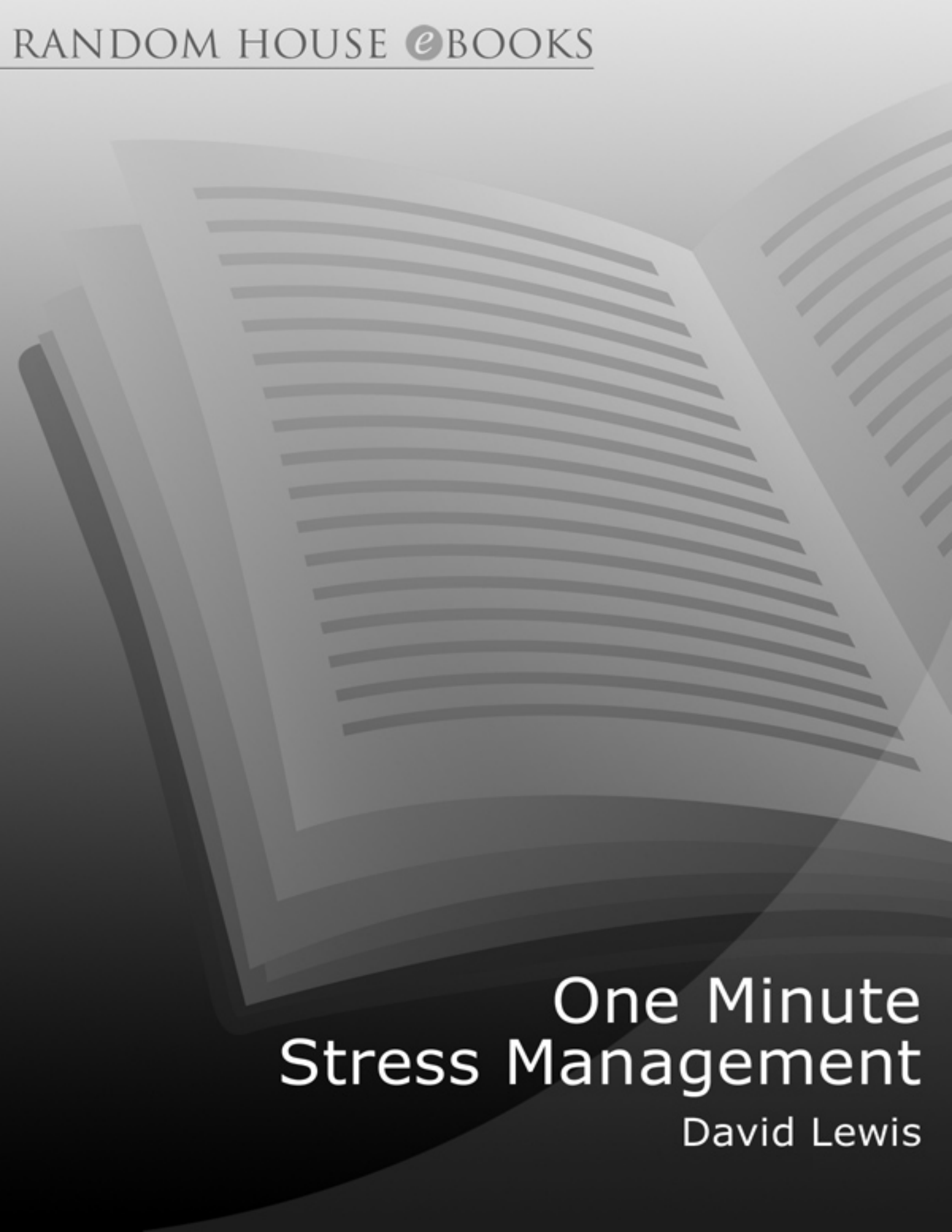


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One Minute Stress Management

David Lewis

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Acknowledgements

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About the Author

Dr David Lewis is an international stress consultant and lecturer. The author of more than two dozen best-selling books on self-improvement, including *The Secret Language of Success*, *Thinking Better* and *Know Your Own Mind*, he obtained his doctorate at the University of Sussex, Department of Experimental Psychology. He is a Chartered Member of the British Psychological Society, a Fellow of the International Stress Management Association, a Fellow of the Institute of Directors and a visiting lecturer in postgraduate studies at the City University. He is founder of Action on Phobias, a registered charity assisting phobic sufferers, and Stresswatch, a non-profit-making company advising companies on stress management. Dr Lewis acts as an adviser to major multinational companies in both Europe and the United States. His areas of expertise include the enhancement of both personal and corporate performance, creative uses of stress and managing change. He appears frequently on British television and has presented a number of programmes in the areas of business and education.

One-Minute Stress Management

*A Clinically Proven Programme
for Safeguarding Your Health and
Happiness in Sixty Seconds a Day*

DAVID LEWIS



Should you read this book?

Try these two simple tests and then decide ...

TEST ONE Clench your right hand.

Question Did you hold your breath while doing so?

TEST TWO Note the time. Now, without looking at your watch, estimate when sixty seconds have passed.

Question Did you *underestimate* by ten seconds or more?

If you answered yes to either of these questions, stress is causing you distress.

In this book I will explain how to make stress work for rather than against you. By mastering these quick and easy-to-use procedures you will be able to transform a potentially destructive force into a powerful ally, liberating hidden reserves of creative energy and enabling you to lead a happier, healthier and more fulfilling life.

And all it need take is *just sixty seconds a day!*

Guide to Techniques

Technique One: For a Stress-Free Start to Your Day

Technique Two: For Giving You Greater Energy

Technique Three: Use Clary Sage to Stimulate Mind and Body

Technique Four: Take Ginseng to Increase Resistance to Stress

Technique Five: Use Music to Manage Your Moods

Technique Six: For Reducing Your Stress While Travelling

Technique Seven: For Improving Your Alertness When Travelling

Technique Eight: For Reducing Stress in Your Shoulders and Neck

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Technique Fifteen: For Reducing Emotional Stress

Technique Sixteen: For Combating Stress in Your Lower Back

Technique Seventeen: For Combating Stress in Your Stomach

Technique Eighteen: For Increasing Your Mental Energy

Technique Nineteen: For Reducing Mental Stress

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technique Forty-Six: Foot Massage for Restful Sleep 3
technique Forty-Seven: Replenishing Your Stress Resistance
Reserves

How to Use This Book

I have divided *One-Minute Stress Management* into two parts.

[Part One](#) provides a general background to stress and explains how it is possible to manage many stress-related problems using procedures which can be learned and put into practice in one minute or less.

Because this book is intended as a practical guide to stress management, I have kept the technical explanations about the nature of stress to a minimum.

[Part Two](#) describes ways of measuring your stress, and provides more than forty practical procedures for managing stress, quickly and easily, under a wide variety of circumstances.

I suggest you begin by assessing levels of workplace stress by means of the questionnaire in [Chapter 8](#). You may also find it useful to construct the stress barometer, as explained in [Chapter 9](#), or to start to keep a stress diary, as suggested in [Chapter 10](#).

These objective measures make it easier to decide which of those situations that you currently find stressful should be tackled first. Start by working with the procedures of greatest relevance to your current situation.

Because they can all be learned so easily you'll be able to put them to work for you right away. Continue with your selected procedure or procedures for a week to ten days, then review the situation.

You may also find it useful to repeat the assessment in [Chapter 8](#) in order to see whether measurable benefits have resulted. You should also ask yourself:

Am I working more happily and enthusiastically?
Has my performance improved?
Do I feel more confident about tackling challenges
that once proved stressful?
Do I feel more in control of events?
Have any symptoms of anxiety, such as a rapidly
beating heart, dry mouth, churning stomach, and
so on, decreased?

You should be able to answer 'yes' to most if not all of these questions. If so, continue using the procedures until they have developed into your natural response to these particular situations.

You can then learn additional procedures to help you manage any remaining stress in other areas of your life.

'The biggest problem in the world could have been solved easily when it was small.'

Lao-tzu

PART ONE

1

Sixty-Second What?

WHEN I ASSURE clients that they can control stress and use it creatively, in a minute or less, their first response is usually disbelief. Their second is irritation. They accuse me of taking their difficulties a great deal too lightly.

‘I have a terrible boss, a shaky marriage, my teenage children don’t understand me, commuting to work each day leaves me exhausted, my love life is non-existent, my debts are enormous and even my dog doesn’t love me. How dare you tell me my stress problems can be solved in sixty seconds a day!’

By way of reply, I sometimes drop a lighted match on to some tissue paper placed in a metal ashtray on my desk. Because it’s been dotted with alcohol, the paper flares up, then burns steadily.

Taking a glass from my desk, I pour a small amount of water over the flames, which are quenched immediately. ‘A small fire can be brought under control quickly and easily,’ I point out. ‘But suppose those flames had been allowed to spread unchecked. In no time papers on the desk would start burning, then the desk, then the room. It would have taken hours to put out the flames. We’d have had to send for the fire brigade and tremendous damage would have been caused. The whole building might have been damaged beyond repair.’

I go on to explain that fire and stress have much in common. Uncontrolled, fire sweeps through forests or rampages through houses leaving death and devastation in

its wake. Controlled, fire provides the energy to drive industry, heat our homes, power our cars, fly our jets and cook our food.

Similarly, uncontrolled stress is massively destructive to personal health and happiness; it wrecks careers, destroys relationships, undermines self-confidence and prevents you from achieving your true potential. Controlled stress, by contrast, is a potent source of creative energy which helps us live life to the full. To feel positive, creative and enthusiastic. To wake each morning inspired and energised by the prospect of fresh challenges to face and new goals to achieve.

Yet neither fire nor stress can easily be brought under control if allowed to rampage unchecked for too long.

Allow stress to get out of hand and it will eventually destroy you.

Catch stress early enough and you can transform it into a creative force for good in your life.

This book will tell you how.

2

Why Managing Stress Can be Stressful

THERE IS A catch-22 with many widely taught stress-management techniques. They can leave you feeling even more stressed than before!

The problem is that most take weeks to master and need to be practised for fifteen to thirty minutes a day in order to produce any lasting benefit.

For hurrying high achievers, those usually described as having a ‘Type-A personality’, setting aside this amount of time in their already hectic schedules is both difficult and demanding. Even when they find the time, the techniques themselves can, at least during early sessions, increase stress.

These barriers to managing high levels of stress were first drawn to my attention by two clients. As with all the case histories used in this book, names and some details have been changed to protect confidentiality.

George, a World-Class Type-A

When we first met, George, aged forty-five, regularly worked an eighty-hour week in his job as managing director of a software company. During a typical seven-day working week he’d be juggling tight production schedules, worrying about cash-flow, and fighting for orders in an increasingly cut-throat market. On top of all this, George

travelled constantly, visiting clients and suppliers in Europe, the US and Japan.

Aggressive, competitive and ambitious, George was exactly the kind of individual that cardiologist Meyer Friedman MD, Director of the Recurrent Coronary Prevention Project in San Francisco, has identified as a Type-A. Only George was even more so. In fact, George was a world-class Type-A, for life just wasn't fast enough. He had turned impatience into an art-form. He hated any kind of delay. In restaurants, waiters served him on the double or risked a furious tirade. Even if he really wanted something, he'd storm out of a busy shop rather than wait to be served. Once, riding with him in an express lift, I watched as George tapped irritably at his watch. It was clear that even those few seconds of enforced idleness were unbearable to him.

Yet, despite the pressure, George loved his fast-track lifestyle and refused to accept that it could ever harm him. 'I don't suffer from stress,' he once boasted to me. 'I'm a carrier!'

But George was so wrong it almost killed him.

He was misled by a widely held belief that, if you really enjoy what you do, it can't be stressful. That, in some way, loving your job provides an antidote to crippling stress.

Unfortunately, this is like saying that if you adore eating and drinking, gluttony will never harm your health! A month before George consulted me, a routine medical check revealed him to be severely hypertensive, with dangerously high blood-pressure.

George was worried, and rightly. He knew that this level of hypertension significantly increased his risk of heart disease and kidney failure, while reducing life expectancy by up to twelve years.

So when his doctor suggested he learn Progressive Relaxation, George agreed immediately. This technique, which involves first tensing and then relaxing each of your

major muscle groups in turn, was developed some fifty years ago by University of Chicago physiologist Edmund Jacobson. Studies have shown Progressive Relaxation lowers blood-pressure, reduces unnecessary muscle tension and creates a more tranquil state of mind. The technique takes about three weeks to learn and requires regular sessions, each lasting about thirty minutes, to ensure results.

With some people Progressive Relaxation proves extremely beneficial. Unfortunately George was not one of them. In fact, it ended up making him even more stressed than before.

‘My doctor gave me a tape cassette of instructions,’ he recalls. ‘I started working with it the moment I returned home.

‘But after only a few minutes I found myself getting more and more tense and anxious. My mind started racing so fast that it was impossible to concentrate on the tape. The more I tried to unwind, the more tense I became. I called my doctor, and she said I must keep going. That it was natural to become more tense at first. But just lying there was sheer torture. After ten days, I found my blood-pressure had actually risen a couple of points. So I handed back the cassette and gave up any hope of controlling my stress through relaxation.’

Shortly afterwards, George consulted me and learned some of the one-minute stress-control techniques described in this book.

Today, without any major lifestyle changes, George’s blood-pressure is normal. He no longer suffers from poor digestion or lower-back pain, and he enjoys more restful sleep. At work, both his problem-solving and decisionmaking skills have improved significantly. He is able to deal in a calm and effective manner with challenges that once sent his stress levels soaring.

George's difficulties are far from uncommon.

The more impatient and competitive people are, the more difficulty they will have in mastering Progressive Relaxation. Or, indeed, any technique involving lengthy training and regular practice, as is shown by my second case history.

Susan, a Two-Shift Career Woman

Like many career women, Susan, a thirty-three-year-old advertising executive and mother of twin daughters, worked two shifts: the first at work, the second when she returned home in the evening. From dawn to dusk her every activity had to be tightly scheduled. 'I used to joke that the only way I could allow myself to fall ill was if it had been timetabled in my appointment book,' she recalls.

Like George, Susan appeared to thrive on her demanding lifestyle. 'I kept fit, getting up at five o'clock every day, winter and summer, to go swimming. I played squash three times a week and took aerobics classes regularly,' she told me. 'I was so healthy, it never occurred to me I could fall victim to stress.'

Susan had been misled by a second widely held myth about stress: that being fit safeguards you against chronic stress.

In fact, your very fitness can make matters worse.

Because you appear so much better able to cope with a high workload than the less-fit people around you, there's a strong temptation on the part of bosses to dump all the most stressful challenges into your in-tray.

'I was always given the toughest assignments,' says Susan, 'because my boss believed I coped with them better than anyone else in the company. If there was an angry client to pacify, it was me they sent for. If there was a rush job to complete, I was always the first in line to be asked. I

became the agency's troubleshooter, always in the middle of a commercial row.'

Because Susan was in such excellent physical health, she was able to work long and hard for years. Then, without warning, everything changed. 'I woke up one Monday morning and immediately suffered a panic attack. I'd never experienced anything like it before and felt terrified. My heart was thumping so fast I felt certain I was having a major heart attack. My husband called out our doctor, who could find nothing wrong. Tests confirmed that my heart was in great shape. The only problem was, I wasn't.

'From that morning on, for more than a year, each day was a nightmare. At work I found it hard to make the simplest decisions. My creativity nose-dived. I wasn't able to cope with tasks which, only a couple of weeks before, I'd have tackled with ease. My confidence was shot to pieces. Just getting up in the morning was a major effort.'

At her doctor's suggestion, Susan agreed to attend classes in Autogenics. Developed during the 1930s by Dr J. W. Schultz, a German neuropsychologist, Autogenic Training (AT) teaches people to relax by repeating such phrases as 'My hands and arms are heavy and warm. My breathing is deep and even.' As with Progressive Relaxation, Autogenic Training can be a powerful stress-management technique.

But for Susan AT proved anything but helpful.

'My problem was finding time to attend regular classes. It was a thirty-minute drive to the clinic and each session lasted around one hour. The only way I could fit this in was by giving up my squash and cutting down on swimming. Without this regular exercise I became increasingly tense. After I'd missed a couple of sessions because one of my daughters was ill, I gave up.'