

How can I put the sizzle back in my marriage? How can I increase my self-esteem? How can I get out of debt? Life's Little How To Book offers clear, concise answers to these questions and more.

Life's Little How To Book

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Life's Little How To Book

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CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Reduce Your Stress Simply	3
Chapter 2: Increase Your Self Esteem.....	9
Chapter 3: Control and Deal with Your Anger.....	14
Chapter 4: Get What You Want in Any Relationship.....	19
Chapter 5: Have Fun Being Single	26
Chapter 6: Remaining Desirable Towards Your Date.....	31
Chapter 7: Healing From a Broken Relationship.....	36
Chapter 8: Put the Sizzle Back in Your Marriage.....	42
Chapter 9: A Married Couple's Path to Sexual Intimacy.....	48
Chapter 10: Raising a Child in an At-Risk World	56
Chapter 11: Supporting Your Child's Early Education.....	64
Chapter 12: Loving Your Pet.....	68
Chapter 13: Nurturing Your Friendships	74
Chapter 14: Recover from the Loss of a Loved One	79
Chapter 15: Find a Career That's Right For You.....	84
Chapter 16: Get the Job You Want.....	89
Chapter 17: Getting Promoted Within the Workplace.....	95
Chapter 18: Get Out of Debt and Get Rich in the Process...	101
Chapter 19: Recover from Internet Addiction	105
Chapter 20: Take Care of Your Own Well-Being	113

Introduction

How can I raise a child in an at-risk world?

How can I heal from a broken relationship?

How can I get promoted within the workplace?

How can I reduce the stress in my life?

These questions, and so many others, run through the minds of most people. Life is complicated. Where can you turn for answers? Bookstore shelves are lined with every topic imaginable, but who has the time to pour through the mounds of self-help material to find the answers?

I thought to myself, “Wouldn’t it be great if there were one book that offered simple answers to plaguing questions across many topics?” I knew I could fill that need. My years as a therapist and public school teacher, my education, and my own life experiences have guided me to the solutions that many people are striving to discover.

Life’s Little How To Book is a simple self-help encyclopedia that provides straightforward, easy to understand solutions and advice for life’s most nagging challenges. From how to remain desirable to your mate to how to get the job you want, *Life’s Little How To Book* addresses issues we all face and offers simple, concise suggestions for how to deal with them.

Chapter 1:

Reduce Your Stress Simply

Stress is something we all experience on a regular basis. Avoiding stress may be impossible, but the good news is that you can do certain things to alleviate it. In our society, people try to reduce stress in a variety of negative ways, such as taking over-the-counter drugs, overeating, and watching television. I'm going to suggest some positive steps you can take to reduce stress. First of all, consider your answers to the following questions:

Do you often get a headache?

Do you notice yourself holding your breath?

Do your shoulders and back often feel tense?

Do you have trouble sleeping?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you have the symptoms of stress. If you don't heed your body's warning signals and do something about your stress, you may end up with a stress-related illness like heart disease, cancer, stomach ulcers, high blood pressure, impotence, chronic low back pain, and respiratory problems. You need to focus on positive ways to reduce the effects of stress. The following are suggestions of what you can do:

Exercise. Exercising regularly is one of the most effective ways of reducing the built up tension in your body. I know every time I exercise my body feels fit and relaxed. Some examples of

Jaleh Donaldson

exercises include bike riding, weight lifting, swimming, and jogging. To keep you motivated pick an exercise program that you enjoy and incorporate it in your daily schedule.

Practice deep breathing. When we're stressed, our breathing is often shallow and short. Taking long, slow, deep breaths can prevent you from having symptoms of stress such as physical tension and fatigue. For two weeks practice the following deep breathing exercise three times a day for fifteen minutes:

Take a comfortable position and put one hand on your stomach and the other on your chest. Slowly breathe in through your nose, hold it for a couple of seconds, and then slowly exhale through your mouth. If your chest rises more than your stomach, that means you're not breathing deeply. To insure deep breathing slowly inhale as much air as you can into your stomach. By doing this you should be able to only see your stomach rise. Practicing this exercise regularly will help change your breathing pattern and reduce the symptoms of stress.

Imagine a peaceful, relaxing place. Sometimes when we are in stressful situations, it is helpful to visualize being in a relaxing place. It helps our minds to clear, the tension to leave our bodies, and enables us to recoup our emotional and physical strength. When I'm stressed out, I imagine myself walking along the ocean, listening to the sound of the waves, smelling the cool refreshing air and feeling the warm sun against my face. For many people, the idea of having a “relaxing place” is new, so at the end of this chapter I've provided some questions that will help you create your own special relaxing place—a place that is unique to you. Once you have this place in your mind, you will be able to visit it whenever the need arises.

Talk to someone you trust. When you're upset, holding your feelings inside doesn't help. It's better to share your feelings with someone you trust. For example, when I talk with someone who is not a part of the situation it releases the negative emotions that I have and it gives me a different insight and perspective. After talking with someone I find myself feeling relaxed and calm. Your problem may not be solved, but talking about your feelings will help to reduce your stress.

Maintain good eating and sleeping habits. When you don't eat or sleep right, your body feels stressed. I find this to be true even when I don't have anything stressful going on in my life. My body naturally feels worn out and has difficulty engaging in daily tasks. So eat healthy foods and get seven to eight hours of sleep a night.

Manage your time effectively. When you're not getting everything done, you're going to feel stressed. Sit down and prioritize what you need to do. Give more time to the activities that are important and less time to those that aren't. By scheduling and organizing your time, you're more likely to get things done and thus feel less stressed.

Think realistically. Sometimes our negative thinking makes things seem worse than they really are. For example, let's say your boss appears to have an angry look on his face, and you conclude that he's angry with you. The truth is, he might be stressed out for reasons of his own. Perhaps he doesn't feel well or has fallen behind on a deadline. Look at the facts before you jump to conclusions.

Laugh. Laughing releases endorphins which are natural substances in your body that can help reduce stress. So when

Jaleh Donaldson

I'm feeling stressed I call up a funny friend who makes me laugh. A few more ideas to help reduce stress are watch a funny movie, read a humorous novel or a book of jokes.

Do something pleasant for yourself. Taking a break from our daily routine can help minimize feelings of stress. Things you can do are get a massage, take a trip, or have dinner at your favorite restaurant. You can also engage in pleasant activities that don't involve money. For example, take a hot bath, go for a nice walk, have a picnic at the park, or curl up with a good book.

Use aromatherapy in your home. The fragrances of aromatherapy, which are usually derived from flower and plant oils, powders, and resins, are designed to reduce stress and affect the mood. Some popular aromas are lavender, sandalwood, juniper, rosemary, jasmine, and rose. Scented candles, incense, and potpourris are examples of aromatherapy. Each person is different, so experiment until you find a smell that calms and relaxes you.

Create a relaxing home environment. Your home should be a place where you can refresh and rejuvenate yourself. You don't need to remodel, just accessorize the space to create a stress-free oasis. Soothing accessories can include pictures of loved ones, fresh or scented flowers, plants, indoor water fountains, artwork, and health and beauty magazines. Have fun making your home stress free and completely relaxing!

Let go of the things you can't control. Many aspects of our environment are beyond our control and oversteering about them wastes our time and energy. For example, you can't change how other people drive or your spouse's annoying little

habits, and you can't avoid being laid off from work or a death in the family. Remind yourself to be realistic about what you can and can't control and don't cause yourself unnecessary stress.

Avoid people who are demeaning or irritating. Mean people are toxic. They drain your energy, stress you out, and make you feel bad about yourself. Avoid them. Choose instead to spend time with people who are friendly, positive, and supportive.

Be assertive. Let people know what you think, feel, and want. You have a right to stand up for yourself without bullying others or allowing them to bully you. Stress occurs when you let others take advantage of you. Practice with friends and family. Especially if there's an issue that's stressing you out, take some time to rehearse what you're going to say. Being prepared in a situation will reduce the tension. Once you've practiced being assertive, you'll be able to draw on your assertiveness whenever the need arises.

Seek support. If you find the stress and anxiety overwhelming, then seek professional help from a counselor who works with clients who have trouble reducing their stress. You can also attend a support group, workshop, or class that teaches stress-management techniques.

Of course no one can totally avoid stressful situations. However by using these approaches for dealing with stress you will help calm your mind, body and emotions for an overall healthier and joyful life.

Jaleh Donaldson

Activity

After completing the questions, use the answers to write a paragraph about your “relaxing place.” Start off by thinking about a place where you feel relaxed.

What do your surroundings look like?

What colors do you see?

What do you smell?

What do you hear?

How does your body feel when you’re relaxed in this place?

What is the name of your relaxing place?

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