



This Way...
That Way...
Over Here!

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Organizing  Resources

This Way... That Way...

Over Here!



Are daily road signs pointing you in different directions?

Are there nonstop demands on your time, energy, money and space?

Every aspect of life has the capacity to direct you **this way** and **that way** leading to confusion, chaos, clutter and stress.

Take a deep breath!

This TipSheet will expose those ambiguous stressful signs
and help you choose a stress-less life.

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Stress – What is it? How did it happen to me?



What exactly is stress?

Not too long ago the word **stress** referred to the diminished structural integrity of bridges. However, times have changed, and stress has become associated with daily living and well-being. Today, there is too much to do, mountains of information to integrate, and too little time, too many demands, too many choices pulling in too many directions. No one is immune to stress. We all experience it. On some days we handle it better than other days. How much it affects us is dependent on our ability to deal with life's little pressures.

Stress is defined as any stimulus that disturbs equilibrium – the physical, mental and emotional strains that throw us off balance. Overpowering distress hits when profound sadness enters our lives or an abrupt change occurs. During these times we tend to understand and accept a weakened capacity to cope. However, daily pressures have the potential to snowball and destroy our equilibrium. Stress attacks in the early morning when we hurry to get ready for work because the alarm clock was not set. Stress continues to build when traffic is backed up more than usual and we are running late for an appointment. At work, stress may have a foothold in every project with looming deadlines. Stress is also evident during the quick trip to the supermarket to buy prepared food for dinner and then realize later in the evening that the dry cleaning was not picked up. Stress often smacks one in the face as children clamor for attention. Stress oozes from newspapers and TV. It maintains a stronghold as we fall into bed to give our bodies a rest (if possible) before another stressful day hits again.

Stress related health issues

Doctors have coined the term "Hurry Sickness" to describe people who hustle all day, experience a high degree of stress and feel little sense of accomplishment. These folks go to their doctor with exhausted bodies and empty souls. They seem to have no time for the things that really matter – family, friends, solitude, relaxation, meditation, exercise...



Americans spend a good part of their day exchanging their time for money to buy new gadgets and other toys they believe will relieve the stress of daily living. But, the more we buy the more we must work to pay for it all and the more time we must spend to care for these so-called *stress-relievers*. As we work more, earn more and spend more, we seem to enjoy life less. This harried life leads to more debt, more stress and ill health. The buildup of stress weakens the immune system which results in mental and physical ailments – headaches, high blood pressure, ulcers, heart attacks, depression, lost relationships, low self-esteem and diminished enjoyment of life.

To break the stressful cycle, we must look at all aspects of our life, eliminate the stranglehold of little irritants, and consciously express gratitude for what we already have.

Stress Filled Spaces

Spaces of Living

The latest buzz word is '*simple*' living. Check out the self-help section of a local or online bookstore and notice the abundance of simple living topics: [Simple Living](#), [The Simple Living Guide](#), [Voluntary Simplicity](#), [Simple Abundance](#), [Simply Relaxed](#), [A Women's Guide to a Simpler Life](#) (my favorite) and *Simplify* this and *Simplify* that. While you are at it, check out topics of [minimalism](#). There is no shortage of information.

The concept of simple living means understanding yourself and your values, eliminating things that distract from those values, and making wise choices that uphold integrity. Simple living is recognizing the trappings that crowd your space – the space in your home and office, the space in your time, the space in your day planner, the space in your life.

Simple living is knowing when enough is enough – not too much, not too little, just enough. It is avoiding debt, eliminating busyness and appreciating the people and things that are a part of your life. Simple living is being grateful for what you have rather than craving for more.

Past surveys revealed that seventy-six percent of Americans express a desire for a simpler life. This is validated from the vast numbers of how-to books. Take your pick from such subjects as [Learning to Live the Simple Life](#), [How to Get Out of Debt](#), [The Wealthy Barber](#), [How to Get Control of Your Time](#), and [How to Organize Your Life](#). Each of these topics and hundreds more show that there is a continued search for step-by-step directions to manage life, even though the signs are pointing every which way. (Many of these books are older versions yet still hold valuable lessons.)

High-powered advertising conveys that happiness is linked to that new car, a bigger home, name-brand clothes, updated technology, and the latest and greatest kitchen gadgets. Madison Avenue philosophy expresses that more space, more time, less work, more fun and peaceful living are all available for a price. But, that price is time exchanged for the needed money.

Do you keep on searching, keep on working and keep on buying. With all your purchases, have you found that illusive life of peace and happiness?

- Self-Challenge

Does the very thought of simple living bring forth the vision of a monastic cell, a cabin in the woods or Walden Pond? Do you wonder how anyone could possibly think about a simple life in the midst of the hustle and bustle of daily living – earning, spending, earning more and spending more?

Questions:

What does living the simple life mean to *you*? _____

What are the treasures you hold dear and what are the non-treasures that are just taking up space? _____

Is your home a peaceful haven or do you cringe when you walk through the door? _____

What would have to change so that you could achieve the life you are searching for? _____

When you choose to simplify, you invariably increase your time, space, money and energy. There will be less to worry about and less that needs your constant care. Simplification provides space for appreciation of people and things around you. There will be freedom to enjoy the treasures. Simplify first, and then the process of organizing will be much easier. The results will be more breathing room, less debt and less stress.

Spaces in Your Environment

The amount of space that surrounds you and how you utilize that space has a direct correlation to your stress level. Some people require more personal space than others and will become stressed and claustrophobic in crowded places. Some people love the feeling of closeness and enjoy the intimacy of having their treasures displayed everywhere. Some people thrive with an open calendar with room for spontaneity, while others need more structure to their days. Some people need breathing room to function at peak performance, while others thrive on external distractions. It is important to understand your stress level in reference to the space around you. Is your space enough, too much, or too little?

Too Hot... Too Cold... Just Right?

Space constantly changes and elicits different feelings at different times. For example, remember when you first moved into your new home or office? Remember seeing all those empty cabinets, drawers and closets and how thrilled you were at the thought of how they would accommodate your needs? As you continued to unpack did you become aware of the rapidly dwindling space and still more boxes of possessions? Horrors! It is time to look at your belongings differently; time to decide – worthwhile treasures or not!

When space becomes crowded with too much -- possessions, clutter or tasks to complete -- your physical, mental and emotional barometers signal stress to your system. Stressful situations arise if you need to search for

missing keys, lost documents, a favorite hat or the potato peeler. Stress arises when you are notified that the water bill is in arrears or when you are late for an appointment because you could not find the directions or, worse, you forgot all about it. Stress looms as you eat fast food out of cardboard containers then hurry to your next stop or task. All the stacks of paper, overflowing closets, stuffed drawers, unread emails, and rented self-storage units reflect stress just waiting to strike. The space around you pulls in different directions, challenges your senses and overwhelms your mind and body. Stress has taken a stronghold on your very existence.

■ Self-Challenge

1. Take a moment to look around the area you are sitting in right now. Do you have enough space? Would you have enough space if you did not have so much *stuff*?
2. Scan through the stacks of papers that accumulate on your desk, counter, table, chairs and floor. Do you know what is important? Do you have a designated file system for these papers? Have you taken the time to set up a system that works for you? Remember that eighty percent of the papers filed are never looked at again. Don't get caught in the paper-keeping trap.
3. Check out the hard drive on your computer. Overloaded? Is there a considerable amount of unread and unanswered emails? Do you have a difficult time finding stored documents because the file system is congested or never adequately established? Take time to purge this huge digital file cabinet and then backup the important data.
4. Look in your day planner? Is it crowded with too many commitments or just plain busyness? Have you blocked off time for yourself, your family and your friends? Is there any white space?
5. How many hours a day do you spend earning money? Do you realize that you are simply exchanging your time for money? How much is your time really worth? Are the gadgets and toys you purchase worth the time required to earn adequate money to pay for them? Are they worth your time to earn money to insure, repair, store and care for them? Take another look at the real cost of all your possessions and decide if your time has been well spent.

Spaces of Time

What did you do with your time today? Were you busy? Keeping active appears to give life meaning. Just look at all we accomplish and how important we have become with our busy schedules. Every day is a rush from here to there and back again. We build our lives on minutes and hours. Imagine what can be accomplished in just five minutes or less – make a call, schedule an appointment, write a letter, pay the bills, file your nails, make the bed, water the plants, pick up milk, vacuum the living room, start the laundry, pull the weeds, and on and on. We are certainly busy and exhausted.

There does not seem to be enough time in one day to get everything done. We are so busy at our jobs that we bring work home because nine to five is not enough. We are so busy we need weekends to catch up on neglected tasks around the house. We are too busy to sit and read a story to a child. We are too busy to watch the sunset or catch fireflies. If we had just a little more time imagine how much more we could accomplish and how much more important we would become. ☹️

In all our busyness we are still searching for more time. We write to-do and wish lists for when we find more time. We tell our children we will spend time with them just as soon as we have accomplished something else. We promise to do this or do that just as soon as there is more time.

Listen up, folks, there is NO MORE TIME to have. We all get the same amount every day, twenty-four hours (1440 minutes) and that is all. Extra time is not a commodity to be bought or found. Time is truly valuable because it is finite. It is only renewable tomorrow morning when we awake. What cannot be accomplished today might get done tomorrow when there will be another twenty-four hours at your disposal.

When there is a reference to time most people do not think about the minutes and hours of life. They think about events and memories. They do not refer to a vacation week as 10,080 minutes of rest and relaxation. They talk about where they went, what they did, those who came along, the change of pace and exciting adventures.

Spaces of time are the happenings and experiences you accumulate every day. Squander time and there are fewer events, fewer moments of happiness. Time is simply cherished increments of life.



▪ Self-Challenge

1. Take a close look at your calendar. How have you used your time – wisely or just plain busyness? Did you schedule time for yourself? What about time for family and friends? What about time for relaxation, solitude, meditation... ?
2. Adopt a grateful attitude. You cannot do everything, so why try? Seek those things that are truly important to you and be thankful for the special moments. Make wise choices daily.
3. Do one thing at a time. Focus on the details without internal or external distractions. Do fewer things of greater importance and eliminate the busyness. You will use the spaces of your time more efficiently and reduce the little stresses of the day.
4. Slow down and make space in your daily schedule. Start today and reap the benefits of a less stressful life. Start a practice of taking one day a week to just relax and have fun.
5. Be cognizant of rushing around, trying to accomplish more than possible. When you eliminate the hurried lifestyle of busyness, you become more aware of yourself, others and the happenings around you. It takes 21 consecutive days to make or break a habit.
6. Time is more than money; it is life experiences. It is the accumulation of adventures. Enjoy the ride.

Spaces in Your Mind

The reference to measurable space is not hard to imagine when you look at the size of a room, the gap in a closet when it is organized, the empty drawer space when old files are purged and the increased computer speed when the hard drive is defragged. Physics is about space and its relationship to matter and energy. The concepts of physics are easy – three dozen socks cannot be crammed into a one-foot drawer. Space just does not allow it.

Another kind of space that is a little more difficult to visualize is the space in your mind – brain space! The brain is about the size of two fists placed side by side and it weighs approximately three pounds. There is not a lot of space to store important as well as trivial information, so the brain must function efficiently. Within the cells that make up this area, you have stored the codes on how to walk and tie your shoes, telephone numbers and addresses, language, math and science skills, the colors of a rainbow and

the words to a favorite song. Considering the space available, it is remarkable how easily it all performs.

You are constantly processing information in your brain to perform daily activities. You may even like to challenge your mental capacity to see just how much the brain will hold and how much you will be able to retrieve at the precise moment you need it. There are days you surprise ourselves with your ability to spew out information, but then there are other days when you just cannot seem to pull it all together. These are days you are on overload. In other words, your mind is filled with clutter that is clogging brain space, just as clutter clogs the spaces in your environment.

▪ Self-Challenge

Sit very still for one minute and listen. Just listen to nothing.

While you are listening, is one portion of your brain wondering what you will have for dinner tonight or worrying if you remembered to lock the car door? Is your mind constantly rehashing past events? Do you feel exhausted by what you *should've* or *could've* done? Or, does your mind take you into the future so you can worry about what *might* happen?

It is rare to listen to silence. If you could, you would be truly present in the moment. If you listen mindfully, then you would be able to pay attention without the chattering of the clutter in your mind. When too much clutter fills the spaces of your mind, it is difficult to simply listen. The average adult speaks approximately 5000 words a day. We have so much to say that there is not enough time to listen either to yourself or to anyone else.

Choices

Life has its ups and downs, no matter who you are – rich or poor, young or old, celebrity or common folk. The daily signs are pulling this way and that way leading you here, there and everywhere, and back again. Stressful days are filled with confusion, chaos and clutter.

It is common to experience stressful moments from time to time, but the degree to which you become overwhelmed can be reduced by the choices you make. Simply put, you *choose* to live life stressfully or to live it in balance. Yes, folks it is a choice! So, choose wisely -- chaos or calm.

Here are some ideas to help you acknowledge the spaces in your life and possible choices to reduce the bombardment of daily stresses.

- Taking a shower is an efficient use of time, energy and water. However, choosing to relax in a bath has the power to reduce stress. By adding candlelight, aromatherapy and essential oils, you can experience a whole new dimension of relaxation.
- It takes a little more effort to set an attractive dinner table. Yet, sitting down to candlelight and china can enhance an evening and diminish stress.
- Creating a peaceful living and working environment is a choice. Quiet music, pleasant smells, warm lighting and a fire in the fireplace radiate a sense of peace. Cluttered areas, overhead fluorescent lighting, harsh computer screens and drum-beating music stress the system. These are the choices you make.
- Preparing a healthy meal is neither complicated nor requires additional space for gourmet condiments and specialized gadgets. Simple ingredients like red, yellow and green fruits and vegetables provide antioxidants for a healthy body. Relinquish the habit of eating out of cellophane or cardboard boxes and choose the simple pleasures of wholesome foods.
- Cooking meals in the microwave is a fast way to produce dinner, but not necessarily a healthy, stress-free meal. The microwave allows for quick action with little thought in meal preparation. While dinner is being zapped, you have a few minutes to accomplish some task on your to-do list. This is a choice of busyness. What would happen if you decided to relax a little, chop the vegetables and be imaginative? There could be more pleasure, less stress and a healthier variety than a cardboard-boxed nuked meal.
- The dishwasher is a top timesaving appliance. You hurriedly prepare a meal, gobble it down in record time, throw the dishes in the washer, and run off to the next task. What have you given up in exchange for the time saved? You have given up the quiet moment with hands in warm sudsy water or the bonding of two people working together to complete a task. Choose to slow down a little and experience a diminishing of stress.
- Multitasking has been touted to be the only way to get all the to-dos accomplished. However, when you choose to integrate too much in a hurried fashion, you do not really enjoy any one thing due to the distraction of everything else going on at the same time. In reality, you can only do one thing at a time, think one thought at a time. When you

choose to focus your attention on the details of the moment you reap the benefits of less stress.

Changing the Signs of Stress

It is within your power to reduce stress and its effects on your life. Timesaving devices and multitasking do not necessarily eliminate stress. They may even be a contributing factor of a heightened stress level. Relaxation never seems to make it to the top of the to-do list when you are hurrying all the time.

When you consciously slow down and allow for breathing space in your life, you notice your surroundings and take pleasure in the little things that happen. You enjoy the company of family and friends. All you need to do is make a conscious decision to increase the space – space in your home and office, space in your day planner, space in your mind, space in your to-dos, space in your commitments, space in your activities and space in your life.

While you may not be able to eliminate all the stress in your life, you can choose a more balanced existence. By clearing out your environment, by recognizing the pushes and pulls of working more to purchase more, by reducing mind clutter, and by understanding your core values, you can control life's small pressures. You may not get everything you *want*, but with wise choices you will have everything you *need*.

Take time to enjoy the little moments of each day and the pleasures of life will be great.

Statistics to ponder

Gathered from a variety of sources

- Surveys reveal that 76% of Americans express a desire to move towards a simpler lifestyle. However, if we continue to do the same things we have always done, we end up with the same results – stress.
- The typical American family spends several hours a week shopping but only forty minutes a week with their children.
- According to a Merrill Lynch survey, there are more than 42,000 malls in the United States. That equals about twenty square feet of retail space for every man, woman and child. These statistics do not include the newest available online shopping potential.

- Americans have rented one *billion* square feet of storage space to house possessions. Our accumulations are bursting at the seams.
- Since 1950 the average home in the United States has more than doubled, even while the average family size has shrunk. We now have more square footage per person and more space to accumulate more stuff.
- In 1967, 48% of new homes had a two-car garage. By 1997 that figure was 79%. There is a growing trend towards a three-car garage to store our power toys. And, a sad phenomenon is that most homes cannot accommodate cars in the garage.
- With cable TV or a satellite dish, we have access to over 61,000 television programs each month. There is the potential to spend fourteen uninterrupted years watching mindless TV.
- Now that all TV stations are digital and flat screen TVs are the norm, where have we disposed of all the old heavy clunky TVs? Landfills? Basement? Garage?
- Six pounds of pennies can be found in the typical American home. "A penny saved is a penny earned." Why not put that loose change to work?
- Americans spend approximately thirteen hours every weekend trying to catch up. Why did we fall so far behind?
- The U.S. Department of Transportation says there are nearly two and one-half times more motorized vehicles in America as there are registered drivers. This figure includes vans, tractor trailers, taxis, military vehicles, government vehicles, motor homes and motorcycles.
- Every year, from periodic oil changes for our vehicles, we spill sixteen times more oil than was spilled in Valdez.
- The League of American Wheelmen estimates that fifty percent of urban space in the United States is devoted to roadways. If traffic is congested now, try to imagine what will happen in a few more years if we choose to walk or ride our bicycles.
- In 1920 the American woman spent less time doing housework than in 1970. Was it because they had less? Timesaving devices have not really saved us time but have provided us with the excuse to have more and do more.
- Airline passenger traffic has tripled in the past twenty years, according to the Federal Aviation Administration. Where are we all going in such a hurry?

- The average life span of a computer is three years. What have we done with the obsolete computers? Have we found ways to donate working computers instead of throwing them in the landfills?
- In 1999 the number of websites totals 40 million, providing us with more information than ever before. Wonder how many there are today? Do we have the time to handle all this?
- Every year, residents of the State of Connecticut produce an average of one ton of trash per person. Most of this trash ends up in dwindling landfills and transfer stations. Recycling is the better alternative. What is happening in your state?
- Even though Americans represent a small portion of the world's population, we produce over half its waste. In one day, we generate enough trash to fill the New Orleans Superdome twice.
- According to the U.S. Postal Service, each household receives 200+ catalogs a year. Most of these arrive between October 1 to December 25.
- John Kremer, a book-publishing consultant in Iowa, estimates that at least 155,000 books are published in America every year. This equates to about 3,000 per week, 425 per day and 26 per waking hour. Let the library (or Kindle) be the storage facility for reading pleasure.
- The Better Sleep Council estimates that between 36-62 million Americans suffer from insomnia. I wonder why!
- Well, you probably will have insomnia now after all these statistic. Solution – take a bath, then call in the kitty or bow-wow to snuggle down in a warm, cozy bed. Good night!

Golden Rule

"Have nothing in your house
that you do not know to be useful
or believe to be beautiful"

~ William Morris, English artist and writer

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