

Is Stress Controlling Your Life?



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Women MANAGING Stress
Creating Happy Relationships, Kids, and Lives.

Can you really feel in control of your life?

It can seem like I am promising you the moon and the stars when I say that you can stop feeling controlled by stress. But it's possible. You can get rid of many of the extraneous stressors in your life and start to feel in control again.

I don't like to make promises that I can't deliver on (just ask the 5th grade when I ran for student council president). That certainly doesn't make life better for anyone. So when I say that I can help you to identify and to make a few simple changes that will help to make a difference in your life, know that I mean it.

I've worked with women for nearly 15 years. I've joined them on some of the best and worst days of their lives. Along the way, we learned from each other. And I want to share some of this wisdom with you.

What do you have to do to get started?

We'll start slow and we'll take it step by step. I'm a big believer in making changes at a personal pace that feels right for you. I've seen people make all of the changes at once. It usually feels great for about two or three days, and then the new habits quickly disappear. The new changes don't tend to stick. By taking it one step at a time, you can make sure that the changes that are working stay in place.

So for right now, the first step is for you to block off about 15 minutes to read over this. If you need to come back again later to re-read certain parts, that's just fine! But for now, all it takes is 15 minutes to get started!

Why are you so stressed?

Not to state the obvious, but have you looked around? I saw a sticker on a colleague's office door one time that read, "If you're not angry, you're not paying attention."

You and I live in a world that has some really cool gadgets that are supposed to make our lives easier. And they have. I'm so glad I don't have to wash clothes in a pot of water using a washboard. I'd look like a ragamuffin if I had to do that. So yes, appliances (and "apps") have made our lives easier. However, that newfound time was just filled with something else.

There's no excuse for a letter getting lost in the mail. You have emails, text messages, Twitter, Facebook, Google+, and even Skype. Your boss just looks at you funny when you say that you haven't heard back from someone yet. What's taking so long? Try another method to contact them!

And whatever did you do with your time before Facebook and Pinterest? How did you watch TV without chatting with the cast at the same time? Why did people even bother carrying on a conversation on a corded phone? Just talk through texts!

A power outage used to be a minor inconvenience. But now, businesses shut down without electricity. Forget no A/C. They literally lose their phones, their invoicing, their schedules, and even a way to open doors without electricity.

There are simply more expectations than you can fit in 24 hours.

Five years ago, no one beat themselves up for not making plant stands out of recycled pianos. Now, thanks to Pinterest, there's a never-ending list of projects and tips for you to try. What started out as a fun way to organize ideas online now gives you yet another way to have guilt trips! What do you mean you haven't tried every recipe and cleaning tip pinned to your boards?

It's no longer enough to make homemade chocolate chip cookies. You now have to make homemade chocolate chip cookies that look like reindeer, Easter bunnies, flags, or graduation hats- all depending on the season.

You probably multitask during your downtime. Doing three things at once is no longer for just when you're trying to clean the house or finish up a work report. You do it when you're having fun, too.

Your smart phone allows you instant access to all things wherever you are: the latest celebrity gossip, spoilers for your favorite TV show, requests from your boss, ovulation trackers, food diaries, the cheapest gas within four states, last minute gift buying from the soccer field, and the latest facts on

the natural disaster that happened halfway around the world just 30 seconds ago...

I hope you get the idea. There's no such thing as not having something to do anymore. Boredom died with dial-up internet.

And so did all of the socially acceptable reasons for not having something done.

So, technology is partially responsible for why you feel so stressed out. Some other reasons for why you feel so stressed are time, money, and LIFE! Life isn't easy. Life isn't fair. And a lot of what is stressful in your life is part of living. Factor in mistakes, money, people's feelings, fears, pain, sickness, and no wonder it feels like life is controlling you, instead of the other way around. Hopefully after reading this, you'll know what to start doing to take back the control (and even some time and money) and to let go of the stress!

Let's do something...

Before we get into the things you need to shift away from doing, let's do something just to give you a frame of reference. I want you to jot down the list of things that you *want* to get done in a day's time (and you can always come back to this later). And while you're doing it, write down how much time you *allot* in your day to spend doing that particular thing on your list.

Here's an example:

Things I Need to Do	Time I Think It Should Take	Time It Actually Takes...
Get ready and out the door in the morning	1.5 hrs	2-2.5 hrs
Drive to work	20 mins	26 mins (without the train)
Work	8 hrs	10 hrs (counting work you bring home)
Lunch Break	1 hr	6 mins (worked through lunch)
Drive back home	30 mins	45 mins
Stop at the grocery store on the way home	15 mins	30 mins
Cook, eat, homework with kids, bath time, bedtime stories	3 hrs	4 hrs
Laundry/TV/Facebook/Check email	1 hr	3 hrs (Pinterest)
Sleeping	8 hrs	4 hrs
Time spent procrastinating	0	1 hr
Total Number of Hours:	23.75 hrs	26.25 hrs

Now, you're probably wondering why there are a few extra parts this sample chart. I want you to take note of the time. I've found either things

take far longer to *actually* do than we plan (take the check-out line in the grocery store- it totally messed up your “in” and “out” plan) **OR** you try to pack too many things in a day. One time when I did this exercise, I discovered that I had a 26 hour day mapped out in my head once I wrote down how much time I wanted to devote to each task. No wonder I always felt behind! It was completely impossible to do what I had planned each day.

This exercise is going to come into play later...so hold on to your list!

Are you ready to get started with the three things that are going to make a change in your life? Let's get started!



NOT SPEAKING UP

Read these questions and *honestly* answer them. I won't know your answers. No one else will either. So it's perfectly fine to be real.

- Do you hold everything in?
- Do you say “Yes” when you really want to say “No?”
- Do you say what you think others want to hear?
- Do you try to please everyone when you answer a question?

If you've answered “Yes” to any of these, then you're not speaking up! These situations are quite common for women. It's natural to want to make others happy. It's natural to want to take care of them. Call it maternal instinct. Call it being polite. I call it a source of stress for many of us.

While you may be excited at the thought of finally sharing what you're really thinking, you are probably a bit nervous, too. You may be wondering how to do that without being rude. Or maybe you're wondering how to share your thoughts without feeling guilty. You may wonder what others will think about you.

Remember: my goal is to help you feel less stress and more in control of your life. Not more stress. So let's talk a little about *how* to do that.



LET OFF SOME STEAM ALONG THE WAY

Vent it. And not venting in the traditional sense of finding someone and just spouting off. You need to vent in a productive way that lets off the right kind of steam and leaves you feeling a bit relieved, instead of guilty for letting it all out.

Venting doesn't mean sharing everything. Nor does it mean exploding either. When you hold everything in, you actually increase the chances of a big explosion happening. Those usually aren't very pretty. And, you usually feel guilty after such a big show.

Think of it like steaming frozen veggies in the microwave. Most of the frozen vegetables now come in bags that let you pop them right in the microwave. They left off just enough steam to keep the entire bag from exploding.

While the bag is steaming in the microwave, you may see a tiny bit of steam escaping. Or you may even hear a very faint sound. But it's normal, and expected. When you open the bag, you will see even more steam escape. Your goal during a conversation where you "let it out" is to be like the bag of veggies while they are steaming in the microwave: a slight bit of pressure is released. Not all of it. Nor are you holding everything back either.

Here's an example of how it works in action:

Your husband comes home and tells you that he's invited his parents over for dinner this weekend, AND he's cooking. Secretly, you want to run away. His mother always rearranges things all over your house, and every time he cooks, he leaves a huge mess everywhere.

Usually, you'd bite your tongue and work yourself up into hives before your in-laws arrived for dinner. Or you'd feel so tense that you ended up being too critical of your kids. Or maybe you'd have a big blow-up with your husband right before they arrived.

This time, instead of holding everything in, you reply in a calm voice,

"Great! A night off from cooking and cleaning for me! Will you help me go behind your mother and put everything back the way it was? If I know you'll help me after words, it will make it less stressful for me."
(Who knows- there may be a special bonus in it for him if he's a good boy.)

Keep your tone and stance as casual as you can. Try to keep the negative emotions that creep in from showing in your voice. Tension and nerves can take a conversation from calm to explosive. When you maintain your voice in a normal tone, and when you say things matter of fact, people go along with it. They don't tend to question. Especially in a situation like this when your husband knows it's a stressful situation for you.

Remember: the aim is to vent just enough of your thoughts and feelings to prevent a big blow up later. The "vent" doesn't really feel or sound like "venting" at all. It is worked into the conversation in a way that feels natural for you to say and normal for someone else to hear.

The more you do this, the easier it will be to do it without the nervous emotions. The tension will disappear with practice!



SIMPLY SAY NO

Just say no- without excuses! Maybe Nancy Reagan was on to something. Quite often, on those occasions when you **do** say no, you give an excuse in the same sentence:

"No, I'm afraid I can't do that. I've got to go pick up my daughter at that time."

"I'm so sorry. We'll be out of town that weekend."

"No, that won't work."

When you give the excuse in the same sentence as the “No” - you’ve now given the other party ammunition. If they are determined that you are going to do it, then they will find a way around your excuse. Don’t give others too much information. They *will* use it!

“Well, I can swing by and pick up your daughter! I’ll be on that side of town anyway.”

“Well how about the next weekend?”

“Well would *this* work instead?”

If you really don’t want to do something, then just say “**NO!**” If you give any other information, they can take that as you *wanting* to somehow find a way to do it. They don’t tend to it as you trying to be polite.

“ ‘No’ is a complete sentence.”

Megan LeBoutillier

Now, having said that, if you *do* kind of want to do what they’re asking, then, by all means, add in the things that are preventing you. But make it easy on yourself if you really don’t want to do something. Don’t give them leverage.



SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

Aren’t you glad no one really knows what you think? While you can learn to read someone’s body language, no one can actually read your mind. Just think about every movie

that's had mindreading in the plot: nothing goes well when people are able to read minds.

So, if mindreading never works out well in the end, why are you turning yourself inside out trying to read their mind so you can say what they want to hear?

Often, what you *think* people want to hear is actually different from what they *truly* want to hear. Maybe your friend doesn't want to go out and spend money on dinner either. But if you think that's what the other person wants, and you say you'll go, then both of you can end up feeling a little let down.

You may end up finding that you have more in common with someone when you open up and really share your thoughts. Or, you could find that it really isn't a big deal to them if you do things your way. It may not matter one way or the other to them.

But if you don't share it, then you'll never know. And you could have felt all of that frustration for nothing.

So how do you bring that up?

“Would you mind if we tried this restaurant tonight instead? I've wanted to go there for a while and it could be fun to change things up a little.”

“Would it be possible for us to do it this way on the report? I'd like to see if the results are different.”

“I’m curious if this way could actually be a little simpler. Do you mind if we try it?”

Again, try to share your message in a casual tone, without the extra emotion. When you’re nervous about something, it’s natural for that apprehension to show through and to be misinterpreted as anger instead.



LET OTHERS SHARE IN THE COMPROMISE

How much time do you lose when you have to pause to answer a question so that no one is upset? The time, but importantly the energy, it takes to craft a carefully worded response is draining! Everyone else usually ends up walking away content. And you may feel like once again, you’ve had to compromise to make everyone else happy (when no one really asked you to do that in the first place).

It’s impossible to please everybody all of the time. Truth be told, it’s hard to please yourself- EVER! So let go of trying to do something that isn’t possible. Focus on what you can do instead.

If you are truly at a loss of what to say, try saying:

“What do you think we should do?”

“Do you have a preference?”

“Is there a bad option?”

“You can please some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time, but you can’t please all of the people all of the time.”
Poet John Lydgate

Opening up the discussion can take the pressure off of you. It can also allow information to come forward that makes it easier to answer the question (or to come up with a better option).



PUTTING YOURSELF LAST

- Do you delay doing things for yourself until after you've done everything else on your list?
- Do you feel like no one respected you and your needs?

Quite simply, when you put yourself last, others get the idea that it's OK to put you last, too. So if you've ever wondered why your co-workers take advantage of your work ethic, or why your boyfriend doesn't plan special romantic gestures, it could be that you've accidentally sent the wrong message to others. They may think you don't mind.

"All work and no play
makes Jack a dull boy."

And you don't mind at first. Taking one for the team here and there is OK. But being the only one who takes one for the team is not OK. The sacrifice you actually felt good about in the beginning can soon turn into a choice you regret. And when something has to give, that thing is usually you.

Over time, putting yourself last takes a toll. You feel cranky, tired, overwhelmed, and used. You distance from others. You stop doing the things that rejuvenate you. There's a list of unfinished projects that you don't think will ever get done. Your ability to do things at the same pace

decreases. It becomes difficult to feel balanced and healthy. Your sleep suffers. Your concentration comes and goes. And the great ideas you used to have turn into mediocre ideas at best.

Putting yourself last may sound like the thing to do in the moment. Doing that consistently comes with a price. It's good to be productive and to get things done. But no one can be 100% productive all of the time. It's OK to move yourself higher up on the list. Here's how...



TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Build in time to take care of yourself every day. Self-care doesn't have to be expensive or time consuming to make a difference.

Self-care can be as simple as taking an extra three minutes enjoying a hot shower. It can be eating your frozen pizza on the nice dishes you use for special occasions. It can be looking forward to your favorite TV show that evening. Self-care can even be as simple and rewarding as not checking your email between certain hours.

There is one little trick for self-care to actually make a difference: you have to know what it is *beforehand*. It's not OK to look back over your day and find something that can count towards taking time for yourself. It doesn't have quite the same impact looking back as it does when you are looking forward to it.

- ✓ **Self-care:** Spending the day looking forward to take-out from your favorite restaurant after an especially busy day
- ✗ **Not self-care:** Laying in bed trying to figure out how you took care of yourself that day and deciding to count the take-out you had for dinner

Now, just in case this one sounds like a bit much (it took me a while to become a believer on this one, too), think about an airplane.

When you board an airplane, the flight attendants give a message before every flight. Just in case the worst possible situation happens and oxygen masks drop from the ceiling, put **your** mask on first before you try to help your child or someone else put theirs on.

It seems a little odd, doesn't it? Think about it. Kids will always put something on their faces: their underwear, a bowl, their grandpa's hat when you aren't expecting it. But when you want a child to do something, they won't do it! If an oxygen mask falls from the ceiling, chances are everyone is going to be a little scared. If you have yours on first and you are OK, they are more likely to be OK putting theirs on, too. Plus, you'll have the necessary oxygen coming in so you can think straight and figure out how to wrangle that mask on them in the event they are too upset to let you do it easily.

"Putting on your oxygen mask first" is a great way to look at self-care. Being rested, eating the foods that fuel you, and taking some time to rejuvenate yourself makes you better: a better girlfriend/wife, a better worker, a better

mom, a better friend, a better daughter, a better committee chair, a better Sunday School teacher...you get the idea.



CREATE HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Creating your own set of personalized boundaries makes your life easier. It takes the pressure off when you have to decide what to do on the spot. Boundaries help reduce your stress by giving you consistency and keeping you from over committing. They will also give you flexibility when you need it.

Here are some boundaries that can make a difference:

- ✓ Going to bed around the same time each night
- ✓ Having a “start” and “stop” time for working
- ✓ Setting your phone so email notifications don’t chime around the clock
- ✓ Making a rule for yourself that you never say “Yes” to anything on the spot- you have to think it over first
- ✓ Limiting the types of items you buy at the store that aren’t on your list
- ✓ Only grocery shopping after you’ve eaten
- ✓ Never saying certain phrases during an argument that are “below the belt”
- ✓ Building in “flex time” in your weekly schedule to catch-up on anything you weren’t able to finish
- ✓ Carving out down time for yourself

This is just a sample list to get you started. Your list can include anything that you feel would be helpful in your life. Having your own boundaries will help you to feel more in control of your own life. When you use your own set of boundaries as a guide, you won't be caught off guard or feel pressured to do something you really don't want to do. Your boundaries serve as your "in the moment cheat-sheet" to help you know what to do.

They will also help you to know when you are bending your own rules a bit, and will keep you from bending too many boundaries at the same time. Bending one boundary at a time is OK. Bending more than one boundary at a time can result in feeling overwhelmed, drained, and like you aren't in control.

Healthy boundaries show respect and kindness for yourself and others. Your boundaries will help others to know where your limits lie, and it will help them to respect you and your needs.



DWELLING ON THE NEGATIVE

- Do you constantly worry and think about all of the things that aren't going well in your life?
 - Do you think of everything that could go wrong?
 - Do you judge yourself at your worst and everyone else at their best?

"Stinking thinking" is one of the biggest stressors that can control your life. Dwelling on the negative prevents positive thoughts from taking root and changing how you see the world.

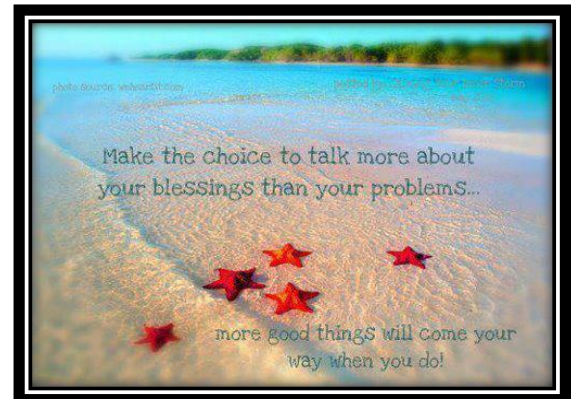
Stinking thinking also feeds your anxiety, keeps you from being able to focus, makes it difficult for you to see things differently, and causes you to doubt things. All it takes is one negative thought to jump-start this cycle of doom and gloom.



LIST THE THINGS YOU ARE GRATEFUL FOR

Studies show that taking time each day to identify something that you are grateful for helps keep stress and anxiety at bay. How?

Your brain is wired to go negative as a way to keep you safe. Think back to the days when you could be eaten by a tiger. Hearing a noise in the brush triggered certain reactions, including the release of hormones that kicked your body into high gear. So while there are no tigers waiting by the side of the road to eat you, you do still have adrenaline and cortisol impacting some of your body's natural reactions to stress.



Identifying the things that you are grateful for helps you to take note of the positive things that are happening in your life. It helps to undo those initial reactions to possible stress and danger. It puts your focus on the things that really are important to you and those things that matter, instead of dwelling on the things that are out of your control.

Make gratitude a part of your daily life. Feel free to join in Women Managing Stress's year long [gratitude project](#). You can connect twice a month to help keep you motivated to find things that matter in your life.



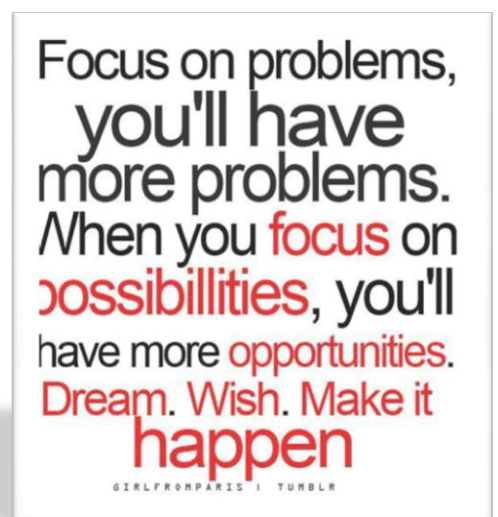
FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE POSSIBILITIES

It doesn't take much for your fear to get kicked into action. Once it starts, it's easy to keep finding things that bring that fear to life and make it seem real. Don't feed your fears. [Focus on the positive possibilities](#) and feed those instead. (Peter Pan said it best, "Think happy thoughts.")

Instead of dwelling on the fact that you got stuck being in charge of a major project, reframe that as an opportunity to improve your leadership and delegation skills.

Stop fretting about the birthday cake that fell on the floor. Reframe it as the party that no one will forget! (Yes, that happened to me one time.)

It can feel a little tricky trying to find new possibilities for stressful situations. But once you get the hang of it, it's kind of fun. Not to mention, it locks your fears up and allows you to focus on the things that you can change (and the things in life that really matter). No more wasted energy!





TAKE YOUR STRENGTHS TO A NEW LEVEL

When was the last time you thought about the things you were good at? Has it been a while? Do you even believe you have strengths? (You do, but it's common when people feel really stressed out, that they don't believe they can do anything right.)

It's easy to compare yourself to others. Society is set up this way, from sporting events to academics to winning in a reality TV show- the message to compare yourself to others is hard-wired in the world. But just like your algebra teacher used to say, you can't group unlike things. You can't compare apples and oranges. You have to compare apples to apples. When you compare yourself on your very worst day to someone else on their very best day, you are comparing apples and oranges.

Be in competition with yourself. Try to break your own standards. Michael Phelps is a gold medal winning swimmer. When he competes, he is trying to break his own records. He is focusing on his strength: swimming. Michael Phelps is not trying to be Michael Jordan. He is not trying to be the best at swimming *and* basketball. He is taking what he does best to the next level. So should you. Focus on your strengths. Make those better.

Take what you do well, and then work on taking it to the next level. But to do that, you first have to start with your strengths. Strengths come in many sizes and shapes. Many people think of strengths in terms of sports or

hobbies. But some of the best strengths are intangible: being forgiving, being kind, being funny, never giving up, encouraging others.

Take a moment to think about your strengths. What do you enjoy doing? What comes naturally to you? If you could be doing anything at this moment (other than reading this fantastic e-book)- what would you be doing? Would you be on a boat? Would you be on a road trip? Would you be trying a recipe you've always wanted to make? Would you be playing in a pool with your kids? Let's build on these strengths and desires.

Whew! You did it! You took some time for yourself. I hope you're feeling relaxed and are excited about trying some of these ideas. If you're feeling a little overwhelmed, keep in mind that we're taking this one step at a time- at a pace that works for you! You are going to start with one idea that you think would be the easiest for you to try. Leave the techniques that may push you outside of your comfort zone for later.

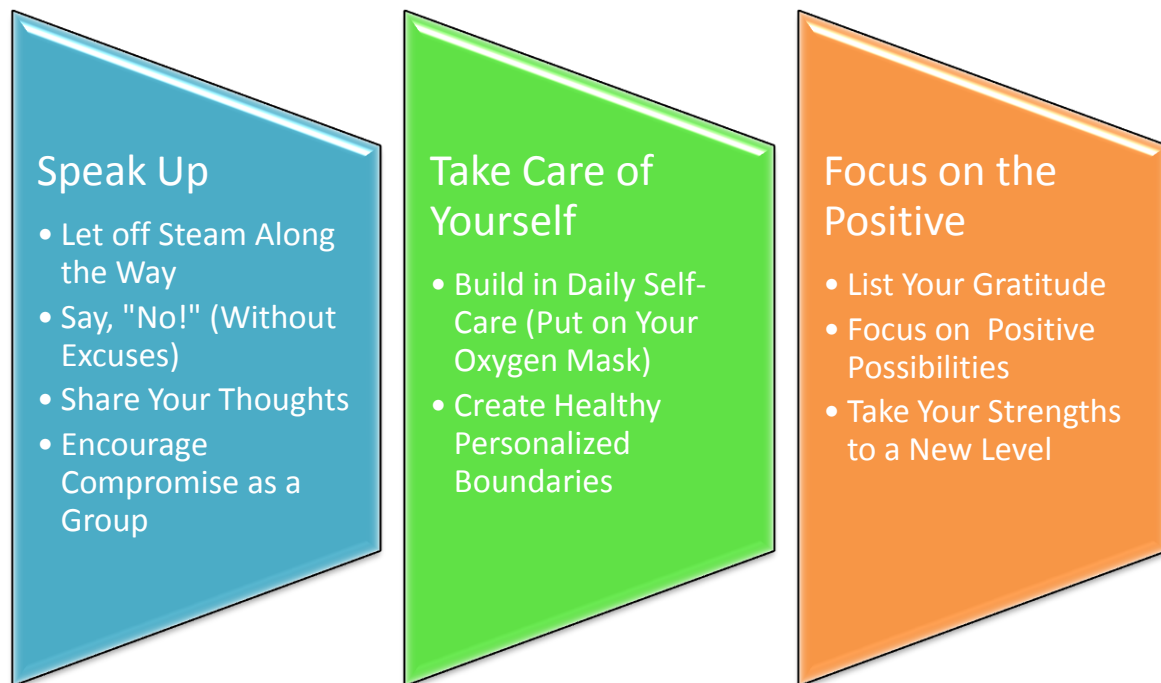
So, here's a cheat sheet of what we've discussed. The three things that you need to stop doing now are:



- Not speaking up
- Putting yourself last
- Dwelling on the negative

Instead, you're going to pick a strategy that feels comfortable for you to start trying. There's no wrong one to start with. It's all about what works

best for you.



Now take a look at that exercise you did at the beginning. You know, the one where you listed your daily routine and how much time it takes. If you left anything off and would like to add something, or if there are things you'd like to do in your daily routine but they aren't there yet, feel free to add those. *(Hint: this is a very good time to add self-care or listing your gratitude somewhere on your routine. If you don't plan it, it probably won't happen.)*

Take just a moment to think about the last line on that list. How much time do you spend procrastinating because something is stressful to do? Do you think it takes you longer to get your work done when you think your

boss thinks you're doing a crappy job? Do you think it takes you longer to get out of bed in the morning because you're dreading someone pressuring you into saying "yes" to something you really don't want to do?

Could you take back control of your life if you didn't spend so much time feeling stressed? Could you do the things that you needed to do and have time leftover to spend on the things that you really want to do?

Take a moment to imagine what your life would look like if you felt in control...what would be different? Get specific. Would you be better rested? Would you stop speeding and rushing everywhere? Would you take time to sit outside and read a book? Would you feel more connected to your boyfriend or husband because you weren't worried? Would you have a smile on your face?

HOW TO GET STARTED

I promised to break this down for you so you would be able to make the changes that can stick and make a difference in your life.

1. Pick **one** thing from the list that you want to try. Doing one new thing at a time makes it more likely to stick. Plus, it won't overwhelm you or those around you.
2. Think of a situation when you can apply that new strategy. It may be at work, at PTA, at church, with your neighbors, with your in-laws, or with a friend.

3. In your mind, play out how you'd **like** for that interchange to go. Try to spend more time picturing the positive. If you play out the negative, it increases the likelihood that it may not go so well at first.
4. Relax as much as you can. You may be nervous the first time you tell someone no, or share what you're thinking. That's normal.
5. Plan something fun and/or relaxing to do after you try your new strategy. It could be rewarding yourself with frozen yogurt with your son. It could be taking a walk around the neighborhood or even buying something from your wishlist on Amazon.com. If you feel your nerves starting to creep in, this reward will help distract you from some of the fear and will motivate you to actually try it!
6. After you try something, reflect on how you did. Find **two** things you think went well. Here are some examples, but it can be **anything** that is positive for you.
 - "I actually **DID** it! I tried something new!"
 - "I said what I thought- and nobody got mad."
 - "I faced something that was hard for me to do in the past."
 - "I didn't back out of doing it."
 - "I said 'no' three times this past week!"
 - "I was able to concentrate at work afterwards!"
7. Then, think of something you'd do differently the next time you are in that situation.
 - "Next time I won't be as nervous because I've done it before."
 - "Next time I'll try saying it with a smile."
 - "Next time I won't feel like I'm about to throw up because of my nerves."

- “I’m going to start doing this every day instead of once a week!”

Once you’re comfortable with the new thing you’ve tried, add in another thing to start doing well when you’re ready. Try to set a timeline for yourself so you keep adding in new things. Remember: add in new strategies at your pace when you are ready.

You may want to ask a friend to be there for you during the process! They can cheer you on when you feel like you can’t do it. They can help give you feedback on the changes they are seeing in you. And they may be able to help you figure out ways to word things that you’re not sure about.

Something else that may help you to be successful is writing down your new strategy that you want to work on. It makes it more real and more likely to happen. Post it in a place where you will see it- your bathroom mirror, on a post-in note in your planner, or as a memo on your phone.

And, I’m going to be here to help support you, too! In just a few days, you’ll get a quick, friendly email from me. And you may get some other check-ins.

In addition, each Sunday, you’ll get an e-newsletter from me. It will give you some additional techniques, stories, support, and more!

Please feel free to let me know your thoughts, and what strategies have worked the best for you! Share your success stories with me! I love hearing those!

I know stress can take the fun right out of life. And I know how discouraging it can be. But I also know it doesn’t have to always be that

way. As long as you have a desire, we can work together to find a way for you to take back the control in your life!

Here's to happiness!

I'll talk to you soon!



WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

Here's where you can find out more about some of the techniques shared here:

Letting Off Steam: [I Don't Need You to Fix It: Just Listen to Me!](#)
[\(Women and the Need to Vent\)](#)

Saying "No:" [Learn to Say "NO!"](#)

Creating Healthy, Personalized Boundaries: [The Vine that Had No Boundaries](#)

Listing Your Gratitude: [The Gratitude Project](#)

Focusing on Positive Possibilities: [Focus on Possibilities, Not Problems](#)

[The 10 Commandments of Low-Stress Women](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



After hearing too many stories of people trying to connect to a therapist “who really got it,” Tammy Whitten decided it was time to leave university teaching and to open her own practice. Her prior years spent working with families in hospitals, schools, churches, non-profit agencies, and inside their homes had given her the insight to know what they were looking for: real life strategies that work in daily life.

Using simple steps and a down-to-earth style, Tammy helps women, couples, and families to find the personalized approach that works best for them. Instead of focusing on deficits, Tammy helps her clients to improve on their strengths, and to let those strengths work for them during stressful times.

Even when Tammy is outside of the office, she is always looking for new ways to solve age-old stressors. No matter if she’s mowing the yard, sewing cushions, baking cookies, or driving down the road, Tammy always finds new insights and analogies about stress and anxiety.

Tammy is an eternal geek. From converting Newton’s Laws of Motion into “The Laws of Relationships” to staying on top of the latest research, she likes transforming knowledge into solutions for the real world.

In her spare time, Tammy loves spending time with her family and friends, relaxing with “ShondaLand,” trying new recipes, and finding ways to fix all of the machines she seems to constantly break.