

STRESS-FREE PARENTING IN 10 MINUTES A DAY

by Mia Von Scha



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INTRODUCTION

I once heard about a woman who, above her baby's crib, had placed the sign "If I kill the baby I will go to jail".

I think only a fellow parent can appreciate this and enjoy the good laugh it provides, and I used to think that every parent should have such a sign. It's only once we become parents that we realise the very thin line we all walk between regular folk and those who beat their kids.

If you've not had kids yet you'll probably think I'm mad, or psychologically imbalanced, or I should be locked up myself even for making such a statement. If you have had kids, you'll know that we all have those times when the stress levels are high, the sleep is low, the baby has been crying all day, and you just feel like you absolutely cannot take another minute of it.

I remember a specific moment like this where I left the screaming baby in her cot, went outside where I have a store-cupboard full of glass jars, and systematically smashed every jar in the cupboard by throwing it against my neighbour's wall. Then I calmly walked back in to a now sleeping baby and cried for an hour. It seemed insane at the time, but in retrospect it was exactly the right thing to do and thinking about it later I realized that had I been even slightly more stressed - had financial issues or a drinking problem or a failing marriage - that my self-control to go outside and break something instead of breaking the baby might not have been there.

Nothing really prepares you for the extra stress that a child brings. You suddenly have to operate on less than half your normal sleep, half your normal income, double your normal expenses, zero time for working on and nurturing your relationship with your partner, and an entirely new role and a new sense of self to get used to. It is not an easy ride and is something brushed over by most well meaning parents, relations, friends and parenting, pregnancy, baby books and courses out there.

Which is why I've focused specifically on reducing stress for parents. Get your stress levels under control and EVERYTHING is more manageable. You're calmer when dealing with your child, which means your child is calmer. You handle your relationships better. When you actually have the time to sleep you sleep well. You're more clear-headed and can make decisions more easily and not overreact to small challenges. And last, but not least, you get sick less often.

"70% of GP visits are for stress-related complaints." – International Stress Management Association.

Now if you already have a child you'll know that being sick and having kids is really not fun. Gone are the days of just climbing into bed with chicken soup and sleeping until you recover. No, life goes on and so do you.

So imagine I told you that by investing just 10 minutes a day in yourself you could reduce the bulk of your stress and be a calmer, healthier and better overall parent. It's true. I use this method myself and it's the reason I haven't gone into mass production of the above-mentioned sign!

Do yourself and your family a favour and read this book. I've tried to keep it short as I know the time-constraints most parents face, but if you really can't get through it all, you can just jump to page 15 and at least do the exercise for ten minutes a day and enjoy the peace, health and happiness it brings to your home.

For those of you who can - read it all. Understanding stress, how we create it and what it does to us is the first step in eliminating it from your life. It's worth the time and will empower you to manage stress in your own life, to raise stress-free kids and to start living the life you were really meant to live.

I welcome questions and comments, so please feel free to contact me or comment on my Facebook page and I will do my best to get back to you as soon as I can.

Enjoy the journey and remember – Be the change you want to see in your kids.

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WHY READ THIS EBOOK?

Professor Herbert Benson, cardiologist and Professor of Medicine at the Harvard Medical School, has been conducting studies into the harmful effects of stress since 1975. In the 175 scientific publications and 11 books that he has authored or co-authored, he indicates that **98% of all our diseases are stress related**. In short, prolonged periods of stress are just not good. When under stress our immune systems shut down. Stress impacts on our performance and affects our ability to concentrate and make decisions. It impacts on our emotional resilience and relationships. Prolonged exposure to stress leads to physical and mental degradation and decreased energy levels.

The solution? Read this eBook and learn how to mindfully engage the Relaxation Response – a **medically proven technique for reducing stress**, eliminating stress-related illnesses and increasing your immune functioning. The Relaxation Response will help you to handle situations in your life calmly and with a clearer mind and will bring you the inner peace and clarity that most mothers just dream about! Play our game and improve all areas of your life by attending to these exercises for just 10 minutes a day.

WHAT TO EXPECT

This eBook will equip you to effectively **understand and resolve your stress, whatever the cause**, and ensure that you are resilient to any of the risk factors associated with stress. I have also noticed that my clients who regularly engage the Relaxation Response have the additional side-effects of improved thinking skills and performance!

- Expect to have a quieter, more focused mind.
- Expect to have a relaxed body that is free from tension.
- Expect a tranquil and peaceful emotional state.
- Expect a happier family.

UNDERSTANDING STRESS

Hans Selye, a pioneering endocrinologist considered to be the first researcher to demonstrate the existence of biological stress, defines stress in his book *Stress Without Distress* as “the non-specific reaction of an organism to any pressure or demand”.

Stress is our ability to respond.

In other words, it is not what happens to us, but how we *respond* to what happens to us. Because stress is not what happens to us but how we respond to this, the mind-body connection is important in understanding our stress response.

The connection between mind and body, something honoured in Chinese thought and medicine for centuries, is quickly becoming part of mainstream Western thinking thanks to Quantum Physics. Any stress in the body corresponds to an emotional/mental stress and vice versa. As we release stress in the mind through relaxation, corresponding physical stresses are also released, and as we release the stresses built up in the body, the mental-emotional stresses fall away too.

Also, specific perceptions, thoughts and intentions lead to corresponding bodily reactions and actions. And different things will create stress in different people. What is stressful to one person may be interpreted as excitement to another.

So what determines what we get excited about and what we choose to respond to with stress? To figure this out we need to first look at the process of how we give things meaning in our lives.

HOW WE PROCESS INFORMATION

According to the research of both Dr. Joseph Dispenza, a brain-science expert from California, and Dr. Bruce Lipton, a PhD cellular biologist from Stanford University, our senses can process about 400 billion bits of information per second. However, our conscious minds can only handle around 2000 bits of information per second. This means that the unconscious mind processes this huge amount of information down by distorting, deleting and generalizing the information based on what is important to you.

You will become consciously aware of information only if it is on your priority list. For example, whatever you happen to be doing, if an alarm goes off, this information will quickly make it into your conscious awareness as it is on your priority list because of your conditioning to react to this particular sound.

What makes it onto our priority lists and how?

Whatever you concentrate on most will become part of your priority list and will determine what your unconscious mind brings to your conscious awareness. That is why, if you are constantly worrying about debt, then debt will become part of your priority list and your unconscious mind will do whatever it can to make sure you become consciously aware of - more debt. And it will delete or distort any information that would get you out of debt.

The unconscious mind will do anything it can to make sure that the outside world matches your inside world. All that the unconscious mind can bring to your attention is more of what you have stressed as important.

If we are assigning meaning to things and thereby creating our own stress, how do we begin to assign a different meaning?

A DIFFERENT WAY OF LOOKING AT STRESS

Try the following exercise with a friend as a way of understanding the relationship between your mind and your experience of stress...

EXERCISE – HAND ON FIST: Place your arm out with your hand in a fist and have another person (Person B) place their relaxed hand gently on top of your fist. Person B then closes their eyes and you will lead them around – moving your fist quickly, slowly, up, down. Person B's job is to maintain contact with you at all times, without hanging on, and with their eyes still closed. You should feel free to move around and lead Person B around the room – take them on a journey! Then swap.

What you will notice with this exercise is that if you are distracted – if your mind is wandering – then it is very difficult to keep contact with the person leading you. If you are relaxed and focused on your breathing and the task at hand, then the process becomes fun and easy.

In order to go with the flow of what life is offering need to be completely present. When you start thinking about something else, you lose the direction and this creates stress. In this case the stress is still fun, but in reality it seldom is.

My preferred definition of stress is “not allowing ‘what is’ to be”.

As soon as you deny what is, you create resistance and this resistance is the stress that creates blockages, which in turn create pain and disease.

Here is a common example:

A couple is struggling to have a baby. When it doesn't happen, they resist the fact that it is not meant to be at that time, and this resistance creates stress, which in turn prevents them from falling pregnant. After many years of trying they give up and adopt. And what happens when the baby arrives? Well, of course they relax about the fact that they can't have their own child, and so, of course, fall pregnant!

The important thing is to try to understand the craziness of resisting what already is. ***Whatever is happening right now is already happening***, whether you decide that you like it or not. The idea is to suspend judgement on what already is, because it already is.

If you really take note of the times when you are most stressed and look carefully and honestly at what your mind is doing, you will find this to be the case. Something is happening and your mind is going "this shouldn't be happening, this should be different, I wish I was somewhere else / doing something else".

This doesn't mean that you can't change situations or that you should allow people to treat you in unacceptable ways. What it means is that if you take a deep breath before simply reacting and go, "well, this is what *is* happening now" and note any instant reaction or judgement that you want to have to that without actually playing it out.

If you can find that moment of calm and respond from that place of calmness within, then you are likely to create real change or speak with true authority when you choose to change the situation or remove yourself from it.

Imagine for a moment that you are caught in sinking sand...

You are in it. What we normally do is start flailing around, freaking out because this shouldn't be happening and end up sinking faster. If you accept that it is as it is, this doesn't mean you just stay stuck in it and sink and drown. It means you stay calm and focused and then will be more likely to notice a solution.

Whatever is happening now is already happening.

I can't repeat that enough. Stress does not come from the situation itself, but from your judgement about the situation as right or wrong. Situations just are. Your mind is the one that then labels them as ok or not ok. "I shouldn't be sinking, this is a disaster, it's all my mother-in-law's fault for choosing this stupid path" as opposed to "Ok, I am sinking. How have I created this? What can I learn? Now let's see if there is some way to change this situation".

What we want to achieve is to take a step back from the mind and create a gap between the actual situation and the mind's interpretation of it.

Why does the mind label things as good or bad?

This is simply based on past conditioning - on previous situations, on your culture, upbringing, and social norms, which also decide what ends up on your priority list. So, if you just react to every situation without taking a step back, as much as you think you are acting powerfully and with intention, all you are really doing is playing out your past conditioning, in other words reliving the past.

I was recently told a story of a couple trying to conceive...

After many years of trying they opted for the IV route. They were booked in and decided to take a short holiday first during which the husband got malaria. When they went for their appointment they were told that they couldn't use the husband's sperm until the malaria was completely out of his system and to come back next month. They were obviously disappointed, and their minds did as any of ours would - judged the situation as 'bad'.

However, before they could return for their next appointment they found out that she was already 2 months pregnant. On phoning the clinic they were told that had they gone ahead the month before, the hormones that she would have been injected with would have caused her to miscarry. At the time of writing this, she is nine months pregnant and ready to give birth to a healthy baby.

The point is that **we don't know the bigger picture**, and events or situations that appear bad to us may have some greater purpose that is in fact good in the long run.

Not allowing what is to be generates stress in the same way that being caught up in the past or future in your head does - you are not actually present with what is going on now.

EXERCISE - WRITING DOWN YOUR THOUGHTS: Take five minutes to watch your thoughts and write/scribble down everything that comes to mind. You don't need to share these thoughts with anyone, so don't censor your writings. Simply jot down everything that you are thinking about. If it involves repetition, write it down as many times as it comes up.

You will see, and this has been confirmed by many psychological experiments over the past few years, that **most of our thoughts are useless and repetitive**, and very seldom have to do with anything that is happening right now. One such experiment, by Harvard Psychologist, Daniel Gilbert, showed that half of the average person's time is spent "mind wandering" – in other words not focused on any particular task but rather just "lost in thought". Our thoughts tend to revolve around the remembered past and the imagined future. "...what did so and so say this morning? Oh I mustn't forget to stop at the shop for nappies on the way home. I can't believe that baby is still not sleeping through the night. I can't wait to get to the beach next week. I have so much to do I can't believe I'm stuck playing choo-choo train for the 50th time today..."

Notice also the judgmental quality of most thoughts. Acceptance is not something that the mind takes kindly to. Generally in our Western culture, acceptance relates to passivity and weakness, when in fact true power and the clarity to make clear, informed and conscious choices only comes when we accept the current situation as is and are able to still out minds to the past and future and deal with what is in front of us right now.

The simplest way to release tension that has already built up is to place your attention on it.

Of course, placing our attention on our pain and stress seems to go against everything we spend our lives doing. The typical reaction to stress or pain or discomfort of any kind is to take your attention away from it (through painkillers, alcohol, television etc.) and this is simply another version of resisting what is and thereby creating more tension. The aspirin, joint, or soapie doesn't remove the stress or pain; it simply makes you unconscious enough not to notice it.

Physical pain is the body's way of communicating with you – letting you know that something is not right and needs your attention. In the same way, emotional pain is a communication that things are not ok at the moment and need to be dealt with or released. If we numb ourselves to these communications, the danger is that we then continue to act in the ways causing the problem and thereby exacerbate it. You'll find that the more you ignore something the more and more intense the communication becomes until you sit with a cancer or nervous breakdown or something that can no longer be suppressed.

One of the aims of this eBook is to assist you in taking awareness into your daily life, linking this to the breath, and dissolving tension and pain by focusing on it and not running away from it.

The first questions to ask, whether in physical or emotional pain are **"How have I created this? And what can I learn?"** I encourage you to use these questions regularly and see what insights you can gain from focusing your attention on the problem (or challenge!) instead of trying to pretend that it doesn't exist.

This concept works on many levels:

On the simplest level, placing attention on a problem area causes us to make the necessary physical or mental adjustments necessary to naturally relieve the tension there (for example, by bringing attention to your shoulders you may realize that there is a lot of tension there which can be released simply by letting them relax and drop down from the tense hunched up position that you didn't even realize you were holding them in).

On a more holistic level, taking our attention inwards, away from the continuous bombardment of the senses, relieves tension throughout the system and simultaneously makes us aware of any areas that need our attention or things that need to change in our lives. This is why relaxation and breathing exercises are so important and why I encourage everyone to attend to them daily.

INTRODUCTION TO BREATHING & RELAXATION

EXERCISE - WATCH THE BREATH: You can do this exercise with your eyes open or closed. Simply watch the breath. Don't change it; just notice it. Feel the air going in the nostrils. Feel how it's cooler as it goes in and warmer as it comes out. Feel the air traveling down into the body. See where you can feel your body expand - in the chest, the back, sides, abdomen. Feel the natural rhythm of the breathing. The ease. Notice how you can't be totally aware of the breath and lost in thought at the same time.

Breathing = life.

No breath; no life. You can go without food for three weeks, water for three days but air for only three minutes. Just that basic understanding should be enough to revalue your priorities. How often are you aware of your breathing? Most of us are taking life itself for granted.

If you are aware of your breathing, you'll see how it changes with emotional states. Watch how your breathing changes when you are upset, angry, or excited. Start to notice how your breathing differs when you are relaxed and when you're stressed.

We're going to get to how to deal with your stress shortly, but for now just start to notice these changes.

Most people breathe shallowly – in the upper chest. This is the same kind of breathing you'll find when you're stressed, and these shallow quick breaths expel too much carbon dioxide from the body creating an imbalance that can lead to fatigue, panic, headaches, and insomnia, to name a few disorders.

What you need to do is to **drop the breath down**, as if you are breathing right down to below the belly button. This mimics the state of relaxed and natural breathing and can on its own switch off the stress response of the body by tricking it into believing that everything is ok (actually everything is ok, the sense of things not being ok is the initial illusion that we need to counteract!). It also massages your internal organs, increases oxygen supply to brain, muscles etc, and centres you in the present moment.

On a purely physical level, **oxygen prevents cancer** (Otto Warburg won the Nobel Prize for proving that cancer cells can't survive in an oxygen rich environment). And **70% of waste in the body is expelled through breathing** (as opposed to 30% from the combination of defecation, urination and sweating) so think of all the toxins that will build up through shallow breathing and the health benefits of the opposite. Note also the effect of oxygen starvation to the brain – creating feelings of confusion, inability to make decisions, forgetfulness, and over long periods of time, even senility.

EXERCISE – BELLY BREATHING: Place your hands on your belly. Breathe into your hands so that your belly extends. Make sure your shoulders are down and relaxed. Fill the lungs from bottom to top and empty from top to bottom. For a moment, forget all past conditioning (especially the ladies) about not having your tummy stick out... let it expand as much as it wants to. If you find this deep breathing difficult at first, try it lying on your back and place something with a bit of weight (like a large book) on your stomach and move it with your breathing.

More air = more energy = more life.

I'm not asking you to do anything that you aren't doing already. **You are already breathing - I'm just asking you to breathe consciously.** The reason for this is that you can't breathe a past or future breath - you can only breathe now, and so breathing is not only a chance to increase your life and energy, but also becomes a link to becoming present - being exactly where you are and actually being there - not getting lost in the mind where past and future seem more important than right now. Breathing brings you back to the present moment.

Why would you want to stay focused in the present? There is no problem in the present moment. Everything becomes problematic when you consider how it will affect you later or tomorrow etc. Right now there are only challenges to deal with. Nothing is too difficult now. Either you can do it now and you do, or you can't and then you put it out of your mind and do something that you can. Now is all that exists. Everything else is in your mind.

The connection between the mind and the body is nicely illustrated by the following visualization exercise:

EXERCISE - EATING THE LEMON: (Have someone read this out to you or simply read it through yourself and then close your eyes and imagine it as clearly as you can). Close your eyes. Imagine that you are in your kitchen at home. Look around. See the light coming through the window. Run your hand along the counter. Now walk over to your fridge. Look carefully at it - what colour it is, the shine of the light on it, any pictures or magnets stuck on it. Open it and feel the cool air rushing out to meet you. The light is on and you can see all the contents of the fridge clearly. Imagine that on the top shelf is half a lemon. Take it out and close the fridge door. Take the lemon over to the counter. Get a chopping board and a sharp knife. Slice into the lemon, cutting off a large chunk. Now bring this piece up to your nose and breathe in the sour aroma. Take it down to your mouth and sink your teeth into it and suck hard as the juice squirts out into your mouth. Open your eyes.

What did you notice?

You may have noticed your salivary glands kicking into action. You may have even felt that tweaking at the back of your jaw that sometimes happens when you bite into something sour. The point is that your body reacts to what is going on in your mind – it does not differentiate between actually eating a lemon and just thinking about eating one.

Your body reacts to EVERYTHING going on in your mind as if whatever you are thinking about is happening right now.

So, if you get stressed about some possible future or something that happened in the past, the body reacts to that stress by increasing your breathing and expelling too much carbon dioxide (as discussed above), increasing your heart rate, tensing your muscles, pumping out adrenaline, and slowing or stopping your digestion – this is what we call the fight or flight mode or the activation of the sympathetic nervous system.

Most people live in that state constantly even though there is no actual threat to them at all – and we wonder why we have high blood pressure, insomnia and digestive problems.

Crime and terrorism sell newspapers. With all this negativity being focused on in the press daily, it makes sense that most people are also consumed with regular thoughts of fear. Now keep in mind that if you are remembering the time you were hijacked, attacked or robbed or imagining the possibility of such an event happening in the future, your body is in that state of panic as if that were actually happening right now. Think of all the energy it takes for your body to react to an imagined hijacking. Are you being hijacked right now? No! Put it out of your mind and let your body relax. Yes? Well then that fight or flight response and the stress it creates will be very useful and will give you the power to act in the situation.

Use your breathing to bring you back - by taking a few conscious breaths you bring yourself back to the present where there is no issue and all those bodily functions can relax. In other words, you simultaneously remove stress from both your body and mind. I'll show you in a moment how to engage the Relaxation Response, a method of using your breathing to eliminate stress.

The most important thing is to bring that quality into your life all the time. Put up a 'post it' note saying: **"Am I still breathing?"** Just one conscious breath dotted here and there throughout your day will transform your life. All you have to do is start with one breath, right now. Become present for your life – really be where you are, instead of lost in some illusion happening in your head.

Just becoming aware of your breathing will also immediately improve the way that you breathe thereby increasing your oxygen uptake, and that in itself will reduce your stress levels dramatically.

Simply breathe. But breathe consciously.

INTRODUCTION TO THE RELAXATION RESPONSE

This is the main exercise of this eBook, the one that I would like you to engage with every day.

This exercise is the result of the research of Dr. Justin Kennedy on the Psychology of Stress and the idea is to help you to manage stress by learning the scientific techniques of Heart Rate Variability to ensure that your heart beats in a relaxed, healthy way.

By doing this simple exercise for ten minutes daily you will drastically reduce all your risk factors for stress-related disorders, you can happily remove yourself from those 70% visits to your GP and you will prevent an ongoing build up of stress and blockages, which become difficult to clear later on. Done in combination with bringing conscious breathing into your daily life will create an unstoppable you!

If ten minutes seems daunting, start with two and increase this every week until you reach the ten-minute mark. If you're finding this easy and are rapidly seeing the benefits, why not increase this to ten minutes twice daily – once in the morning and once in the late afternoon or early evening.

The relaxation response will quieten your mind, relax your body and calm your emotions and place you in the **optimum state for peak performance, concentration and stress-free parenting**.

And, it can be used anywhere, anytime.

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR ENGAGING THE RELAXATION RESPONSE

- Sit comfortably and relax your body. Close your eyes and breathe through your nose. Allow a minute or two of watching your breathing until it is slow and regular.
- Breathe out until your lungs are completely empty.
- Inhale gently, engaging your diaphragm as we did earlier in the belly breathing exercise, and count in your mind “one... two... three”
- As you count “four” in your mind, take a brief pause, holding your breath.
- Exhale gently as you count “five... six... seven... eight... nine... ten...”
- After a brief pause, begin again.
- Remain relaxed. If your thoughts wander, keep bringing them back to your counting.

In other words, you are going to breathe in to the count of three, pause on four and then breathe out for the counts of five through ten. So your out-breath will be twice as long as your in-breath.

Make sure that you do count the numbers in your mind as you breathe as this minimizes your thoughts and adds to the relaxation experienced.

IN CLOSING...

Life is short. Every day could be your last, so make the most of it.

Live each day as if you knew for sure that you would be dead by midnight. What would you do differently? Are the things you're stressing about really that important? Who would you spend your time with? What would you be doing?

Greet people as if it's the first time you've met and say goodbye like you'll never see them again. You may not. Resolve all conflicts and arguments. Apologise. Forget about being right.

Stop accumulating so much unnecessary stuff.

Treat everyone with respect and kindness. Including yourself. Do something special for yourself.

Take time to really appreciate things – the food you're eating, the sunrise, your family, the feel of the hot water in your shower.

Be completely present in every experience as if it was the last time you were ever going to get the opportunity, or speak to a particular person, or to feel love.

There are a million and one ways that you could die during the course of your normal daily routine, so this may very well be your last day. Life is short. Make the most of every breath. Make the most of every moment.

And remember... Be the change you want to see in your kids!

Wishing you an amazing, stress-free parenting journey,

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P.S.

If you've enjoyed reading this eBook, please let me know via my website or Facebook page. And please take a moment to pass it on to other's who may benefit from making these changes.

If you're still facing problems or emotional challenges and you feel you would like some extra assistance, feel free to contact me – my Personal Breakthrough Session

is designed to give you the fresh start needed in order to raise unlimited kids and an unlimited you.