

FOUR STEP GUIDE TO IMPROVE STRESS TOLERANCE

Stress is triggered when we get carried away by strong emotions. The daily challenge of dealing effectively with emotions is critical to the human condition because our brains are hard-wired to give emotions the upper hand.

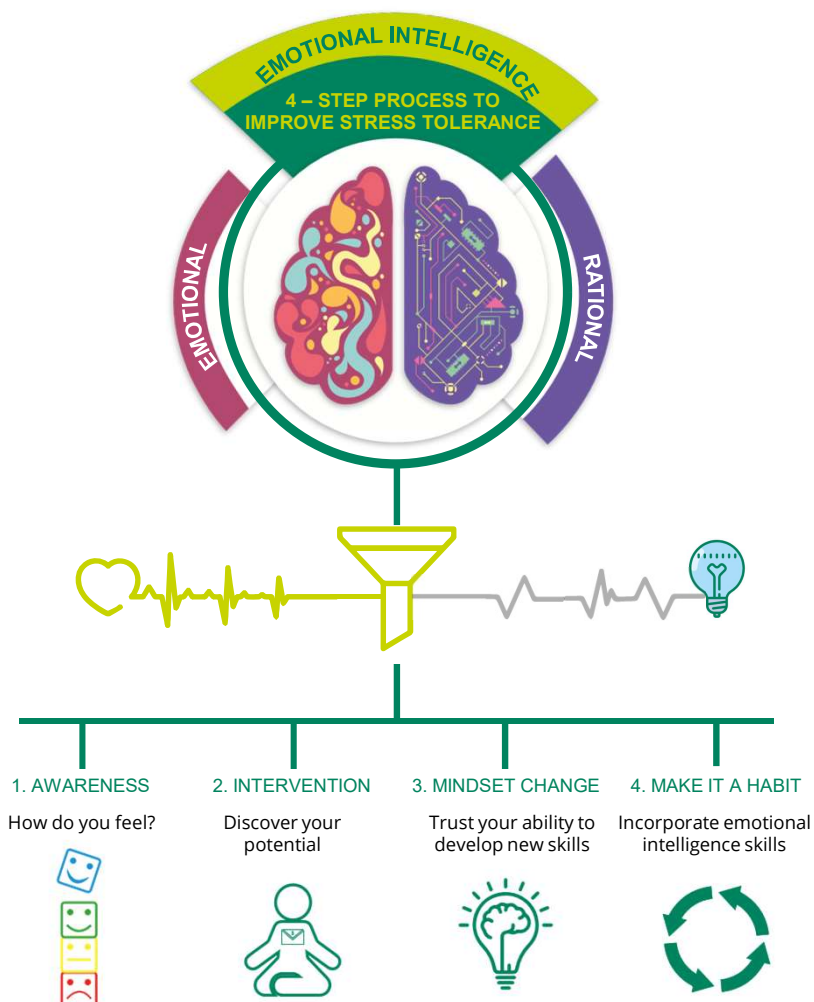
The limbic system, the place where emotions are produced, and the frontal lobe of the brain where logical thinking takes place influence each other and maintain constant communication. The communication between the emotional and rational “brains” is the physical source of emotional intelligence.

Reducing stress has societal and individual benefits, such as:

- Boosting productivity at work and decreasing amount of sick leave days.
- Improved psychological health as reducing stress improves sleep and lowers irritation, anxiety, and depression. It also improves interpersonal relationships with co-workers or family members.
- Improved physical health as stress depletes energy and nutrients that may otherwise be used to protect the body

The **4 STEP STRESS TOLERANCE GUIDE** will help you manage the stress related emotions when they kick in!

Follow this **4-step guide**, strengthen your stress muscle, and withstand stressful situations without developing physical or emotional symptoms.



1. AWARENESS

How do you feel?



THE STRESS CONTINUUM CHECK: HOW ARE YOU CURRENTLY FEELING?

Relaxed and composed and not getting carried away by strong emotions

Surrendering to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness

Trusting in your own ability to overcome the problem at hand and with an optimistic disposition toward new experiences

Feel the situation has an impact on mental and body functions such as anxiety, sour mood, poor concentration, breathing difficulties and chronic tension

Indicators of Stress: Please refer to the check lists below.

How do you commonly react to stress? Be aware of the physical and mental sensations, ruminating thoughts or recognizable actions you experience while under stress

Physical and mental sensations

- Feel wound up, wired or overwhelmed
- Feel anxious and moody
- Experience tension in the neck, back and shoulders
- Suffer from headaches, dizziness, or shortness of breath
- Disrupted sleep patterns
- Loss of appetite or heartburn

Habitual and Ruminating Thoughts

- "This is too much to bear"
- "I just can't face it anymore"
- "How do I get out of this?"
- "I wished my problems would all just disappear"
- "Can't somebody do something to help me?"
- "How did I end up in this stressful situation?"

Recognizable Actions

- Taking a deep breath, going for a walk, exercising, meditating
- Looking for alternative strategies
- Ignoring the problem and hoping it will go away
- Passing the buck to someone else
- Letting emotions surface
- Using alcohol, tobacco or taking a tranquilizer

2. INTERVENTION

Discover your potential



Choose between a variety of exercises to reduce the signs and symptoms of stress

ENVELOPE OF CONFIDENCE



When you are in a stressful situation remain inside your “Envelope of Confidence. Follow the 3-step process to regain a calmer stance

1. **Plan** a course of positive action – to limit and contain stress
2. **Maintain** an optimistic attitude – in the face of sudden change and negative experiences
3. **Feel** that you have control or influence – over stress-inducing events

FIVE MINUTES BREAK EXERCISES

5 Minutes

Several physical exercises can help shift unsettled emotional states to calmer and more relaxed feelings. **Do not wait until a crisis emerges** take 5 or 10 minutes to practice and make them part of your daily routine.



Diaphragmatic or Belly Breathing

Keeping your chest and ribcage as immobile as possible, breathe through your nose and allow your belly to expand and power the inhalation. Then exhale slowly through your partially opened mouth.



Acupressure

Using the thumb and forefinger, squeeze the fleshy area between the thumb and the forefinger of the other hand. The sensation should be slightly uncomfortable, but not painful. Maintain pressure for about 5 seconds, repeat on the opposite hand, and then repeat the entire cycle two more times. Your sense of tension should recede.



Purposeful Distraction

Write down a list of things that you can do when in the grip of stress. The very act of putting them on paper offers a sense that you have planned ahead.



Replace the worrisome thoughts with pleasant and peaceful mental images.

Give yourself a “worry break” by consciously setting your woes aside and promising that you will revisit them at a specific time later in the day.

3. MINDSET CHANGE

Trust your ability to
develop new skills



Once you have attained a calmed and relaxed state

- Take a positive attitude towards the situation
- Trust your own ability to prevail to any obstacle that may arise
- Genuinely feel that you can control or influence the situation

4. MAKE IT A HABIT

Incorporate emotional
intelligence skills



REPEAT THIS PROCESS AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE

1. Repeat the process when needed, gradually your communication between the emotional and rational brain will create new reaction habits and you will be able to withstand adverse events and stressful situations before you develop physical or emotional symptoms.
2. By remaining centered and calmed is easier to absorb life blows without jeopardizing your physical and mental health

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