

PRESSURE-FREE

Living

Less Stress. More Success.

Simple Steps.



Jump Start

Sessions 1-3

Tools for optimum health,
relationships,
and performance.

Elle Ingalls



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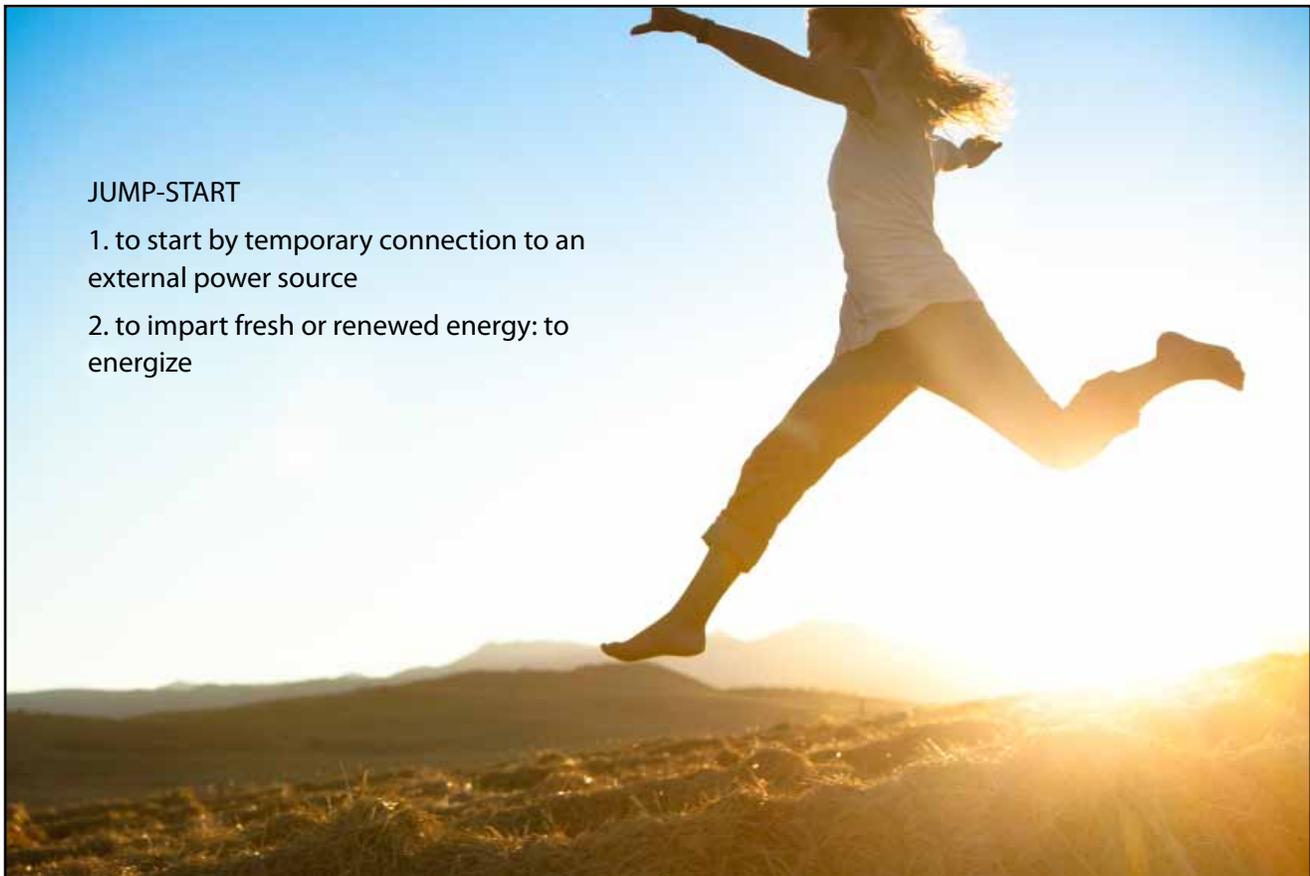
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FOREWORD: YOUR QUANTUM LEAP



JUMP-START

1. to start by temporary connection to an external power source
2. to impart fresh or renewed energy: to energize

A sudden change in energy is what many of my clients have expressed happens to them when they use the Nine Tools System and live Pressure-Free day after day. Their lives seem to transform. For some, it happens in a moment, for others, it takes a few weeks of using the tools to feel their impact. But right away, your mind and your body start to act differently as you eliminate the constant flood of stress hormones you used to release over and over again each day.

I encourage you to stay open to change. When you sense your mind thinking, "I can't..." or "I could never..." catch it and ask what you *can* do.

This book is yours. You may print out any pages you want. Write all over it. Make it your own as you start walking, or quantum leaping down the Pressure-Free Living path with me and hundreds of

others. Then the hundreds will turn into thousands. Then millions of people who are no longer caught up in stressful, harmful ways will be living Pressure-Free.

- Elle Ingalls



INTRODUCTION: HOW TO STOP STRESS AND DESIGN YOUR LIFE

Do you ever listen closely to the tone and sentiment of conversations you overhear?

Do you notice people's expressions and body language when they think no one is looking?

If you follow stories of chronic diseases and personal break-downs in the media, you realize that there is a lot of worry and stress out there.

How do we stop stress?

This book will go to the root cause of the physical and mental conditions we call stress. I will show you what the fight-or-flight stress response does to your mind and body, and how you can stop the stress response in its tracks.

You will learn to use simple tools to interrupt the stress response before your body can release damaging hormones.

People and events don't cause your stress. It's your *emotional reaction* to people and events that starts the struggle. You will recognize emotions that signal the onset of stress-- Anger, Anxiety, Annoyance, and feeling Ashamed--and know what to do.

This book contains a wide variety of tools for you to experiment with to find out which ones work for you. For example, one of my favorites is "empowering questions," which shift my mind's focus from worry and negativity to effective problem-solving.

I will include tools to clarify your goals and dreams and advance them every day.

These tools are the miracle that helped me replace the stress and struggle in my life with daily joy and purpose.

My mission is to help you craft the life you were born to lead and share your gifts and talents with your family, your community and the world.

To get there, we will need to overcome a fundamental barrier: the stress response. We all

trigger it now and then, most of us on a regular basis. When that happens, adrenaline and cortisol impact every cell in our bodies.

These stress hormones cause us to look at the world through the lens of potential threats. In that primitive mindset, self-defeating behavior makes perfect sense. From self-doubt, procrastination and addiction to one-upmanship, arguing, blaming, even bullying. Under stress, it's difficult to imagine a fantastic life and to take the steps to get there.

If you trigger the stress response once, you can feel lousy for as long as a full day. In that weakened state, you are vulnerable to triggering the stress response again and again.

Many people live their entire lives under the influence of stress response hormones. The toll on mind and body is enormous. The risk of Alzheimer's, heart disease, cancer, and other diseases is greatly increased.

If you purchased Jump Start, Sessions one through three, you have 18 tools to work with.

If you purchased Quantum Leap, all six sessions, containing 41 tools, are yours. You will learn to recognize when an Upper Limit Problem is sabotaging your efforts to change. You will learn to connect with healing energy. And you will receive time management, organizing and planning techniques to take control of the outcomes of your life.

Discovering and implementing the Nine Tools in my life and in the lives of my husband and sons has brought us more joy and better mental and physical health than we would have ever thought possible.

My clients report amazing, immediate changes in many facets of their lives, from health to relationships to performance under pressure. Sharing this precious knowledge is my life's mission. Come join Team Pressure-Free!

- Elle Ingalls October, 2012

SESSION 1: SAYING **NO** TO THE STRESS RESPONSE

In this first session, I will inform you of the physiological and psychological effects of the stress response. You will understand how the stress response is affecting your health, relationships, performance, and outlook.

With this information, you will be able to create compelling reasons to stop triggering the stress response. Now.

In the sessions following, I will show you specific steps to stop the stress response during the 10-second window between the triggering event and the release of stress hormones, and I will describe common situations where the stress response tends to occur.



Your tools will keep you calm and able to find solutions.

As we go about our day, our brain is constantly evaluating stimuli inside us and around us and sending signals to our body. This happens without conscious thought on our part. When the brain perceives a threat, it engages the fight-or-flight stress response.

This pattern goes back thousands of years, to the days when sabre-toothed tigers and hostile tribes roamed the earth.

For example, if we suddenly realize that we are in the path of a speeding car or under attack by a dog, the stress response focuses all of our mind's and body's resources on escape or on defending



ourselves. This is a good thing.

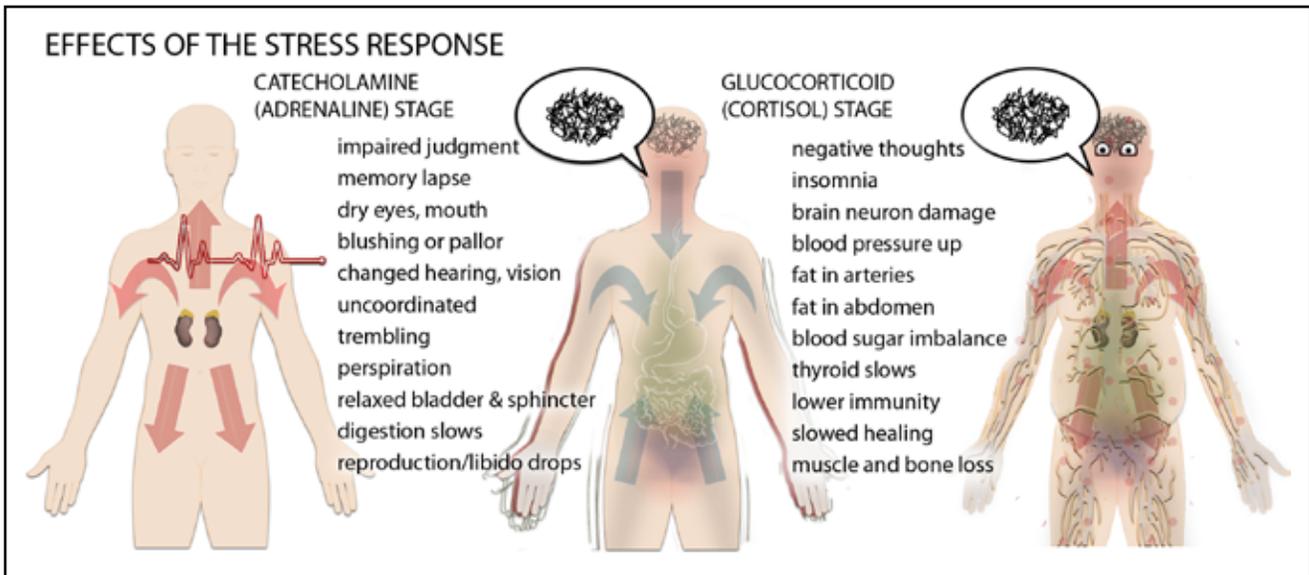
Unfortunately, the brain is also prone to triggering the Stress Response in social situations that pose little or no real danger to us. Stage fright. Irritations during a difficult day. An embarrassing mistake. An unpleasant memory.

Sensing a threat, your brain triggers the release of hormones that can profoundly affect your body and your mind long after the original event has passed.

Here is what happens when your brain senses a threat:

1. You become alert and attentive to the environment.
2. Your heart rate increases.
3. When your heart rate reaches a certain level, the center of your adrenal glands, the medulla, located above your kidneys, releases a flood of adrenaline and other catecholamine hormones into the blood stream. These hormones prepare you for violent muscular action: fight or flight.
 - Your heart rate and breathing rate accelerate.
 - Your face pales or flushes or alternates between both.
 - Your digestive system slows down or stops.
 - Your reproductive system and libido slow down or stop.
 - Your bladder muscles and sphincter muscles relax. You feel like you have to go the bathroom.

SESSION 1: SAYING **NO** TO THE STRESS RESPONSE



- Many of your blood vessels constrict.
- Fat and glucose are released, readying our muscles for action.
- The cells in your arms, legs and brain become dehydrated.
- The glands that produce tears and saliva are inhibited, causing dry eyes and dry mouth.
- Your pupils dilate, causing brightness and blurring.
- You experience loss of hearing.
- Your reflexes instantaneously accelerate. You become jumpy and awkward.
- Your body shakes.
- Your palms sweat. ¹

These are the physical reactions that make you crash and burn in the middle of a speech, test or athletic event. That make you lose your temper on the highway or in a difficult conversation or after an hour of listening to a crying baby. That cause you to panic when you're running late and can't find your wallet and keys, or when the computer crashes at deadline.

4. When the perception of the threat is gone, the outer part of your adrenal glands, the cortex, pumps glucocorticoid hormones into the blood stream to restore the balance of water, sugar, and salt in your cells. However, an over-abundance of glucocorticoids has negative

side-effects:

- Neurons in your brain's hippocampus become very fragile and endangered, affecting our ability to learn and remember.
- You may experience increased feelings of anxiety, which can trip the stress response all over again.
- You may experience sleeplessness.
- Your cognitive performance is impaired.
- Your thyroid function is suppressed.
- Blood sugar imbalances occur.
- Your bone density decreases.
- Your amount of muscle tissue decreases.
- Your blood pressure rises.
- Your immune system is suppressed.
- Your inflammatory response is suppressed.
- Wounds and torn tissues like muscle fibers repair more slowly.
- Your level of abdominal fat increases, which is associated with a host of diseases and health problems.
- Your levels of "bad" cholesterol (LDL) increase and your levels of "good" cholesterol (HDL) decrease. ²

This is the stress response hangover that wears you down, makes you feel vulnerable and crappy. This

SESSION 1: SAYING **NO** TO THE STRESS RESPONSE

is the foundation for chronic disease and a major reason you feel that life could be a lot better if you only knew what to do.

It takes up to nine hours for these hormones to clear from a male's system. And for females, the negative effects of the glucocorticoids can take up to 24 hours to dissipate!⁸



To put it another way, when you panic or become angry, you become awkward, impulsive and prone to behaving in unproductive ways. Then your cells get sick for hours. You are less sharp mentally, more likely to forget things.

Your blood pressure and bad cholesterol increase, and you start to gain stress fat on your midsection. Your immunity goes down, making you vulnerable

to whatever infections and viruses are going around. You disrupt the normal healthy function of every cell in your body. In that weakened state, you are prone to tripping stress again and again.

You can choose to stop this cycle. From the moment your brain signals your heartbeat to increase and you experience the first sensations of stress, you have up to 10 seconds to stop the release of the stress hormones.

Ten seconds to stop the Stress Response from ruining your day, your health and your happiness.

When you understand all of the nasty things that these floods of stress hormones do to you, you can begin to create your unique compelling reasons to just say "No" to triggering this fight-or-flight stress response.

Reason 1: Improve your health, prevent disease, or recover from a disease.

Stress and its negative emotions cause changes in our genetic code that lead to disease.¹⁵ Nearly every disease that humans experience is either caused by stress, or exacerbated by stress.

- Stress fat
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Heart disease
- Cancer
- Eczema



Where there is anxiety there is a line to the bathroom.

SESSION 1: SAYING **NO** TO THE STRESS RESPONSE

- Psoriasis
- Inflammatory diseases
- Auto-immune diseases
- Osteoporosis
- Muscular diseases
- Dystonia
- Gastro-intestinal diseases
- Ulcers
- Problems with bowel movements
- Frequent urination
- Reproductive problems

And the list goes on.



Reason 2: Improve your relationships.

Perhaps having better relationships is a compelling reason for you to stop stress before you are in fight-or-flight and you either want to fight the other person or avoid them. Once we are under the influence of stress hormones, we become hyper-vigilant for threats. We often say and do things that we really don't mean. Hurtful things, because we think we are protecting ourselves.

Think about how would you really like to relate with the people in your life:

- Spouse
- Partner
- Children
- Parents
- Family members
- Friends
- Boss
- Co-workers
- Employees
- Other people

Reason 3: Improve your performance.

Another area where Pressure-Free Living can help you change is your performance:

- At work
- At school
- In athletics
- In your intimate relationship
- In public speaking
- In the creation of art/music/writing/research
- On vacation!

You will experience less anger and anxiety. You will think more clearly and remember more. You will get calm, focused effort instead of anxious struggle. Your body will heal better and faster.

9 Hours for Males, 24 Hours for Females. This is simply too long to compromise our bodies. Each of us is worth far too much to have these hormones deplete us of our life's energy.

Clearly identifying the reason(s) why you no longer want to trigger the stress hormones and wish to experience Pressure-Free Living is the first step to a Quantum Leap in all of these areas of your life.

The first step: Recognize your stress triggers

Although our emotional responses to life tend to evolve as we mature, for most of us, triggering the stress response continues to be an unconscious lifetime habit. When confronted with difficult situations, we tend to react with the same emotional responses over and over again.

Now we have a choice, a chance to create new habits. Here is how we will get started:

1. Recognize the warning signs of the four triggering emotions: Anger, Anxiety, Annoyance and feeling Ashamed.
2. Use a one or more of my "tools" within the 10 seconds before the hormones can release.

SESSION 1: SAYING **NO** TO THE STRESS RESPONSE

The Warning Signs of Stress: The 4 A's.

I have identified four emotions that accompany stress: **Anger, Anxiety, Annoyance, and feeling Ashamed.** To be able to use our tools in time, we must notice the early onset of these emotions. Here are some examples of mental and physical signs:

- Tension in your shoulders, face or other area
- Sinking feeling in your stomach
- Twitching
- A surge in your heartbeat
- Change in your tone of voice, posture, or facial expression
- Biting your nails
- Jiggling your leg
- Biting pens or pencils
- Furrowing your brow
- Negative thoughts

When you are clear what these emotions feel like and look like, you can pattern out when and where they tend to arise: in the workplace, at the dinner table, at the ballpark, driving to work, in bed during the late hours when you are trying to fall asleep.

Here are just a few typical situations:

- Arriving late or missing a deadline
- Too much to do, too little time
- Feeling unprepared, anticipating pain
- A shocking surprise
- Worry about job, health, relationships, money
- Performing or speaking for an audience
- Worry about things we have no control over
- Gossiping or backstabbing
- Guilt, envy, jealousy
- Resentment or rage
- Being annoyed by someone or something
- Someone you are with trips stress, and you go down with them
- Fatigue or hunger
- Disappointment
- Embarrassment
- A bad dream or memory



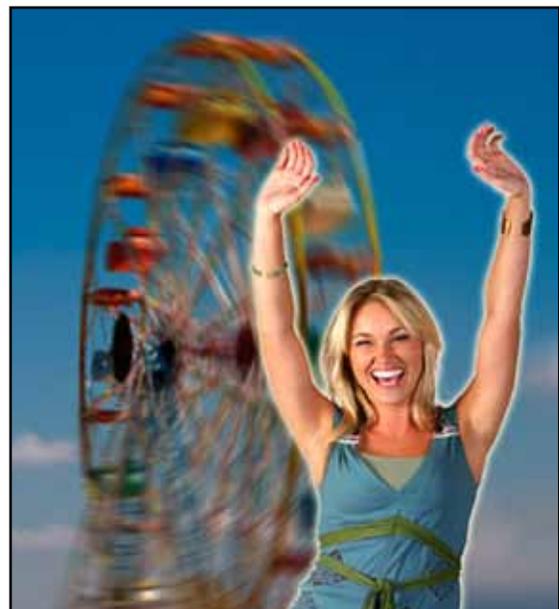
Using your tools prevents arguments.

- Self-sabotage
- Seeing your own weaknesses in someone else

Once you are aware of the emotion, it is time to stop the emotion and replace it with positive thoughts and action. My first "tool" for you does just that.

Your starter tool: Celebrate awareness of your emotions by pushing your Ferris wheel!

Every time you feel one of the 4 A's start to well up in your body, imagine a small Ferris wheel right in front of you. Put your hands on one of the cars of the Ferris wheel and push it up toward the sky! Make that wheel spin!



SESSION 1: SAYING **NO** TO THE STRESS RESPONSE

This tool has been very effective for my clients, and here are some reasons why:

- You will hopefully smile because the movement is somewhat comical. A smile triggers positive emotions that calm you and interrupt the stress response.
- If social propriety has caused you anxiety, you will realize how harmless it is to loosen up and do something a little unusual!
- By moving energetically into a more erect, open posture, you free up the flow of nerve impulses, blood circulation and breathing. Your energy stays *up*.
- You are celebrating and rewarding yourself for progress. By recognizing a triggering emotion, you are taking the first step toward stopping stress.

Once you keep pushing you imaginary Ferris wheel and go the entire day without triggering the stress response, your body will heal and rejuvenate all night long, instead of flushing out stress

hormones. You will be thinking more clearly and solving problems that may have eluded you.

Now that's worth celebrating!

In his book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins says that successful companies create positive momentum by celebrating even the smallest incremental gains.⁵

Every time you push your Ferris wheel, it turns a little more easily next time. Soon, you will be on a roll!

The Nine Tools

In the next session, I am going to build for you an imaginary toolbelt, just like a big, wide toolbelt a construction worker would wear. Every morning, when you first awake, you put on this strong imaginary toolbelt to protect you from reacting to the four A's: Annoyance, Anxiety, Anger, and feeling Ashamed. In the 10-second window before your stress hormones release, you can use one of these tools to prevent yourself from letting these A's ruin your day, your mind and your body.



SESSION 1: SAYING *NO* TO THE STRESS RESPONSE

YOUR TURN TO WRITE

How would stopping the stress response change your life? What negatives would go away? What positives would be added?

What are your most important reasons to just say *NO*?

SESSION 2: THE NINE BASIC TOOLS TO STOP STRESS

The Nine Basic Tools to Stop Stress

These tools can help you take control of your emotions, your decision-making, and the direction of your life. Try them out, play with them, and figure which ones belong in the front of your toolbelt for a fast and stress-free response to life's challenges.

Tool 1: Relax your abdominal muscles.

Tool 2: Curves of Life perfect posture.

Tool 3: Take a 15-second belly breath.

Tool 4: Smile!

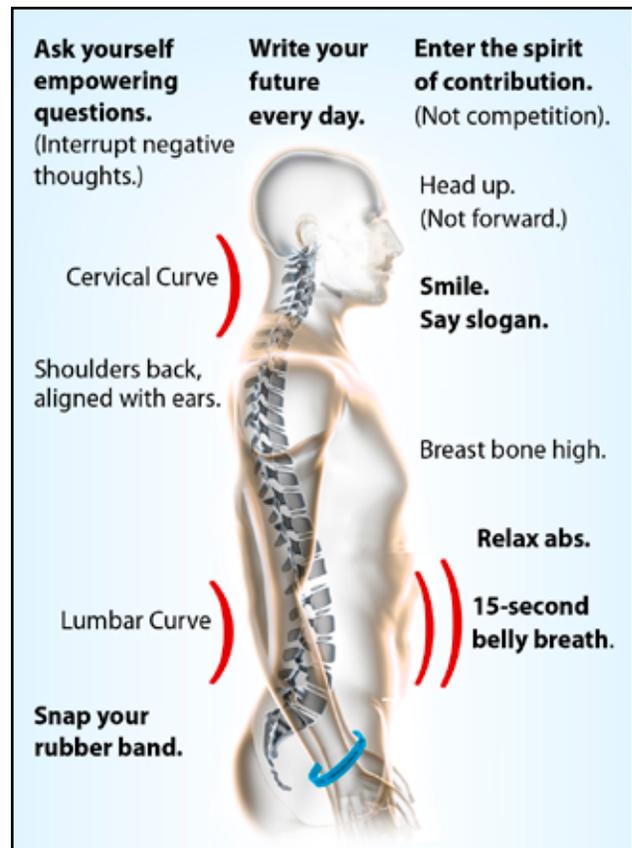
Tool 5: Say your slogan.

Tool 6: Interrupt negative thoughts with empowering questions.

Tool 7: Snap your rubber band.

Tool 8: Enter the Spirit of Contribution.

Tool 9: Write your future every day.



Tool 1: Relax your abdominal muscles.

In stressful situations, the abs are often the first place we get tight.

Let your belly relax and expand freely as you inhale. Relaxed abdominals prepare you for perfect posture and open up your belly for deep breathing. Practice relaxing your belly before you inhale every day.

For years I walked around with my abs pulled in to look trim and fit. Let's see how well this works. First, it forces you to breathe shallowly only into your chest, reducing your oxygen intake. Second, it flattens out the lumbar region in your lower back, reducing nerve flow. Third, your shoulders tend to roll forward, putting you into a slouch.

To naturally tone your abs and breathe well, relax them just before every inhalation and slightly tighten them at the end of exhalation.

Tool 2: Perfect posture with Curves of Life

Head up, shoulders back, breastbone high. Popping into perfect posture will instantly give you better nerve and blood flow, promote clear thinking, and make you look and feel more confident. To perfect your posture, look in the mirror, or feel with your hands, your "Curves of Life" in your neck (cervical curve) and lower back (lumbar curve). See diagram above.

When my clients relax their abs and move into perfect posture with proper Curves of Life, their faces become so relaxed and radiant it takes my breath away.

If you slouch or let your head droop, you flatten your Curves of Life, reduce your physical and mental effectiveness and open the door for more

SESSION 2: THE NINE BASIC TOOLS TO STOP STRESS



To restore confidence and flow, keep your head up.

negativity, mistakes, and mishaps. When we are stressed, we tend to slouch and send out defensive energy. Poor posture affects how others respond to us.

A recent study by Harvard professor Amy Cuddy suggests that putting yourself in an expansive “power pose” for as little as two minutes before you have to perform decreases your cortisol and increases your feelings of confidence and effectiveness. Smile until you feel happy (Tool 4, ahead). Move your body like you are strong and confident, and you will begin to feel strong and confident.⁶



A confident posture promotes a confident mindset.

Posture is something I work on every day, at the computer, when I drive, and when I eat.

I can still hear my mother’s voice reminding me over and over again to sit up and stand up straight. “SU-SU,” she would call out, even when I was an adult. I have always wanted good posture, yet for decades my conscious efforts to keep my head up and my shoulders back would eventually give way to the familiar slouch. I didn’t seem to have a compelling enough reason to change.

Help came in 2006, when chiropractor Dr. Mark McCullough showed me that I had “forward-head syndrome,” a common condition aggravated by slouching. The cervical vertebrae in my neck did not have the proper curve - they were actually curving the wrong way - and I was choking off vital nerve energy in my spinal cord.

Three years of weekly spinal adjustments, exercises and encouragement from “Dr. Mark” have played a key role in restoring my cervical curve and improving my posture.

Tool 3: Take a 15-second belly breath.

Put your hand on your belly and let it expand like a big balloon.

A deep belly breath lowers your heart rate and stops hormone release. Breathing with your belly draws in more oxygen and expels more carbon dioxide than breathing with your chest. Practice belly breathing every day.

If you are trying to lower your heart rate, performance coach Jason Selk recommends that the breath be 15 seconds long.¹⁷

For the ultimate calming breath, breathe out and tighten your abs. Then relax your abs and slowly draw in air through your nose, first filling your belly completely, then your chest. Hold for two seconds. Then release the air slowly through your mouth, first emptying your chest, then your belly, squeezing out every bit of air you can with your abs. Visualize the air as it enters, enriches, and heals every cell of your body. Then watch it carry away your stress.

SESSION 2: THE NINE BASIC TOOLS TO STOP STRESS

Most people stop breathing naturally from their bellies around age 10 to 12. Starting in late elementary school, children bring the air only into their chests, never taking a full breath.

When I was on the women's rowing team at the University of Michigan, one of our teammates had us all lie down on our backs to see if we were chest breathers or belly breathers. Sure enough. There I was. A chest breather, lying on the soggy ground at Argo Pond in Ann Arbor at 5:30 in the morning.

I learned how to bring the air all the way deep down into my belly, hold it, then release it slowly through my mouth.

Tool 4: Smile!

A smile triggers positive emotions that calm you and interrupt the stress response. If you are smiling, it is physiologically impossible to get upset. Even a little grin will help! If smiling is inappropriate, just stay neutral. Don't let the corners of your mouth turn into a frown.

I have a colleague, Ed Zentera, who is a fabulous music teacher. When I asked him his secret, he said, "I smile a lot." Ever since he taught me that, I started smiling more with my students, and he was right. They respond. They play better. Smiling at others reduces their fears and anxiety. When it's not appropriate to smile, I simply stay neutral and refrain from frowning, which releases a different set of chemicals in the brain.

Tool 5: Say your slogan.

Create a phrase that is easy for you to remember and empowers you to stay up, above stress.

Just do it! Stay UP! Let it go!

Whenever negative thoughts and chatter intrude, say your slogan to return to a more powerful and productive state of mind. You can use slogans to reconnect with moments in your life when you felt remarkably successful or powerful or calm or full of love and peace.

If I'm experiencing anxiety before an event, I use Nike's *Just Do It! Or Be fearless! Or Be outrageously courageous!*

If I am interacting with someone, and I feel my energy turning negative, I relax my abs, pop into perfect posture and tell myself *Stay Up!* or *Let It Go!*

You can develop slogans for your golf swing, your important meetings, and your household chores. You may have a unique slogan for steering clear of an argument or annoyance.

Tool 6: Interrupt negative thoughts with empowering questions.³

When we feel like things are going wrong, our thoughts gravitate toward worry and speculation. If we slip into stress, our minds will create stories to explain the negative emotions we are feeling. Then we tend to blame and shame.

Take a few minutes to really listen to the voices in your head. Most of have a few different kinds of voices chattering in our minds! Do you have voices that scold you or accuse you or goad you to attack others or to pity yourself? Sometimes you will recognize a voice as your own. Sometimes you will hear an echo of a parent or another influential person in your past.

The best way to silence negative voices is to engage your mind on a task in the present moment: ask yourself empowering questions.

Put your mind to work solving the core problem, not the threat-based images of stressed thought. Here are examples:

Situation: Your boss is over for dinner, and you are hoping for a promotion. Then your young child starts acting out.

Empowering questions:

- How can I stay present, calm and above stress?
- How can I keep my heart-rate low?
- What tools should I use?
- How can I assist my child?
- How can I make this amusing or otherwise

SESSION 2: THE NINE BASIC TOOLS TO STOP STRESS

lighten the mood?

Stressed responses:

- My heart rate increases, my face turns red, and I yell at my child to behave.
- My child is so out-of-control.
- My boss is going to think I'm an idiot.
- My chances for a promotion are hopeless.

Situation: You are home and running late for an important meeting. Now you can't find your car keys.

Empowering questions:

- How can I stay present, calm and above stress?
- How can I keep my heart-rate low?
- What tools should I use?
- Whom can I call to say that I'm running late?
- When did I last have my keys, and what happened after that?
- Is there an alternate solution? Can someone help me?

Stressed responses:

- Crap. Everyone is going to be mad at me at work.
- I am so disorganized.
- Who is the idiot who moved my keys?
- Why is everything in this house a mess?

Situation: You are driving home when you suddenly remember an embarrassing moment in your past. Your mood plummets.

Empowering questions:

- How can I stay present, calm and above stress?
- How can I keep my heart-rate low?
- What tools should I use?
- How can this memory make me stronger?
- What can I learn from this past experience?

Stressed responses:

- I am such a hopeless case.
- If only this hadn't happened...

Tool 7: Snap your rubber band.⁴

A loose rubber band around your wrist is one of

the great innovations for breaking a habit. **Snap your rubber band to stop negative thoughts and keep stress from triggering.** A little pain will train your mind to stay UP above worry, fear and anger.

In 2006, I found a gem of a book called *A Complaint Free World* by Will Bowen. Bowen challenges us to break the habit of complaining by going 21 days without complaining, gossiping or negatively criticizing. You put a rubber band on your wrist, and every time you say something negative, you switch it to the other arm.

The majority of us complain nearly every other sentence. *Blah-blah-blah-blah-blah*. Bowen warns that you may realize that certain friends or family members drag you down with their complaining. It can be a good idea to inform those closest to you that you are trying to reduce your negative talk. This will explain why your behavior has changed.

Could I go 21 days in a row without complaining? I hoped that wearing my heirloom rings and switching them if I slipped up would help motivate me to stay out of the mental mud. I started my 21-day program at one of my son's hockey games. I had to switch my rings more than 20 times during that game alone!

Since then I've become a much more calm, positive hockey mom and baseball mom. And it's a good thing, because my youngest son is now a hockey goalie. So I'm a goalie mom which is one of the most stressful jobs in the world.

Tool 8: Enter the Spirit of Contribution.^{13,7}

When your focus is on a simple goal, to **contribute your best to make things better for yourself and others**, your outlook and your relationships can become more positive and clear.⁸

We have all encountered people in the throes of competition, who try to one-up you or put you down in subtle, almost imperceptible ways. Or perhaps they put themselves down and act ashamed or insecure.

SESSION 2: THE NINE BASIC TOOLS TO STOP STRESS

In their minds, they are constantly comparing themselves to you and to others. We have all been there, with our imaginations caught in the threatened world of the stress response. We have felt jealous, envious, embarrassed, ashamed. We have gloated in victory, argued and bullied.

Parents, teachers and other authority figures can inadvertently promote this negative mindset when they try to motivate with comparisons: *Why don't you act like Billy over there? You're better than him. Now prove it.*

When people you care about act in difficult or unproductive ways, ask yourself what problem they are trying to solve with their behavior. How can you contribute to a solution? Or is your best choice to stay clear of them?

Competitive dramas play out every day in sports, in offices, in families. When a member fails, the group may boo, blame, even banish that member. Then nothing grows but negative energy.

In *The Science of Being Rich*, Wallace Wattles shows how people find ways to turn benign incidents into competitive controversies. At home, we insist that our way of doing the dishes is the best and only right way. If our child fails to make the team at try-outs, we rationalize excuses or denigrate the coach or the kids who *did* make it. We try to control conversations and the actions of others to fit our personal beliefs.

Approaching situations as a contributor is always win-win. In sports, work, and relationships, your role is simply to contribute to success - yours and the team's - and to celebrate achievements. The negative approach that others take does not need to change you.

Gay Hendricks reveals that most of us have an "upper limit problem," an inner voice that tells us we don't deserve happiness and success. The voice says, "It's great you won today, *but* you're going to lose eventually, so don't celebrate too long." When things are going too well for us, our upper limit problem finds a way to trip us up.

Recently I came home in a great mood from a

symphony rehearsal. It was after 10 pm, however, and I soon discovered that the man and boys in my house had not followed through on my request to do the dishes and go to bed at a "reasonable" hour on this school night.

They were flopped on the couch, oblivious to the time, a hockey game blaring on the television and all the computer screens on. I had expected to come home to a dark, quiet house.

I could have smiled, breathed, and found a way to contribute to everyone going to bed for a peaceful night's sleep.

But instead, my upper limit problem turned my thoughts negative. I focused on my own expectations, and now I could almost feel the drip, drip, drip of the hormones releasing into my blood stream, even though I was working hard to not let them in! But they came anyway, in a flood.

I strapped on my apron, started doing the dishes, and the complaints started rolling out of my mouth. I tripped stress and spent the next day miserable.

Tool 9: Write your future every day.^{11,9,12}

Take time to imagine in detail the life you desire. What do your relationships look and feel like? What does your ultimate daily life look and feel like? Every day, write down your dreams and goals, and write your action steps to get there.

Your unconscious mind works for you around the clock, solving problems and making decisions based on the future you imagine for yourself.

Most of us approach daily life without clearly imagined ultimate outcomes. We don't have consistent goals and visions that our unconscious mind can fixate upon and generate strategies to reach.

So every day our life's direction shifts in response to chance, circumstance and stress. We drift.¹²

In *What They Don't Teach You in the Harvard Business School*, Mark McCormack tells of a 1979 study that asked Harvard MBA students: "Have you

SESSION 2: THE NINE BASIC TOOLS TO STOP STRESS

set clear, written goals for your future and made plans to accomplish them?"

Only three percent of the graduates had written goals and plans; 13 percent had goals, but they were not in writing, and the remaining 84 percent had no specific goals at all.

Ten years later, the members of the class were interviewed again. The 13 percent of the class who had goals but not written goals were earning, on average, twice as much as the 84 percent who had no goals at all. The three percent who had clearly written goals and plans were earning, on average, ten times as much as all of the other 97 percent put together! Wow!

Here is how I write my future every day:

Choose a time of day, and set aside five minutes. I do this right before bed. Some people do this first thing in the morning. Gather the following items:

- Your calendar, whether it is hard copy or on your phone or computer.
- Your planner if you have one. Or a blank book, notebook, paper of any sort, or a white board.
- Writing utensil.

Find a quiet spot and take a look at your calendar. What is happening over the next few days and months? Do you have any goals about your activities that you might write out? Do you have any major dreams about your future? In session 6 of Quantum Leap, I will share some ways to develop your visions and dreams. Here are some highlights:

Step 1. Write out your major goals, dreams and visions either right in your planner for tomorrow's date (if it is evening) or today's date (if it is morning), or write this in your journal, notebook or whiteboard.

The first goal I write every night for the next day in my planner is "Stay UP, Pressure-Free, in my Genius Zone all day!"

Step 2. Create a short to-do list for tomorrow

that includes the most important things you must accomplish, and then include at least two items that will start some energy flowing about your goals, dreams and visions.

Here is a sample list from my planner:

- groceries
- laundry
- e-mail coach Smith about Pressure-Free Living
- create audio for website
- prepare for noon meeting

Step 3. Now look at the items on your calendar for the day for which you are planning. Look at each item, and decide in your mind how great you want it to be. Write a word or two to describe the outcome you want.

Here is what my agenda looks like.

10am Violin lesson with Rachael - fabulous!

11:30 Session with Tom – exquisite!

2:00 Meeting with nonprofit – amazing!

3:30 Dentist with boys – excellent!

I know – I use a lot of superlatives! But I *want* to! I really want all of those items to be fantastic.

I started visioning and goal setting when I was a teenager. When I look at the goals I wrote years ago, I am astonished how much has come true, maybe not exactly when I thought it would or in the form I thought it would take, but there it is. For example, in 1992, I wrote that I would create a music school by the time I turned 50. Well, on February 14, 1996, my husband and I co-founded the Music School of the Battle Creek Symphony, and I was 34 years old!

Books by goal guru Steven K. Scott and others helped me create a personal strategic plan, like a business plan for life. Such planning helps me understand what is important to me. My daily to-do lists now include action items that advance my long-term visions.

Just start writing down your visions and dreams, and you are on your way!

SESSION 2: THE NINE BASIC TOOLS TO STOP STRESS

Your Turn to Write: The 4 A's Worksheet

What situations cause you to feel Angry, Anxious, Annoyed or Ashamed... or otherwise trigger stress?

Example: When I'm anxious. I procrastinate, which makes me more anxious.

I get angry when someone tailgates me when I'm driving.

What tools will you use to stop stress?

1 Relax abs. 3 Breathe. 6 Empowering questions: What can I do right now to start getting this done?

4 Smile! 5 Slogan: "Let it go."

SESSION 3: THE RECOVERY TOOLS

Sometimes we just don't pull a tool out in time, and we get shot of stress hormones.

What do you do after you trigger the stress response?

Here are Nine Recovery Tools to help you recover faster and steer clear of triggering again.

Recovery Tool 1: Strap your tool belt back on!

It's just slipped down your hips a bit, so strap it back on and keep using the tools that work for you. Look over your tools and keep them at the ready.

Recovery Tool 2: Cut yourself a break.

We are human. Stuff happens. A smile can help. We all have years of habits of reacting. One of my biggest stress triggers is when technology doesn't work right. I immediately go into fight-or-flight. I start blaming, "I paid good money for this printer. It should ALWAYS work perfectly for me. How could they sell me such a piece of junk. Etc."

Now when I see this start to happen, I cut myself a break; and I cut my printer a break...before I go hunting for a sledge hammer!

Recovery Tool 3: Protect yourself and others from your stressed-out state.

You may want to close your office or bedroom door and give yourself a little time and space so that you don't end up regretting the way you may behave. Or try a "Please Do Not Disturb" sign.

I created this tool after working with a college student who shared with me that when she triggers the stress response, she heads to the library for some quiet hours of study. She knows that if she goes back to her room, she will probably find a way to argue with her roommate! And then she might trip all over again!

Recovery Tool 4: Widen your vision.

My husband shared this idea with me. He said that when we trigger the stress response, we tend to focus on everything negative. We see everything as hopeless or a problem.

We inherited this trait from our primitive ancestors, a wariness for possible threats.

When we have triggered adrenaline, we may feel uneasy or irritable or jacked-up or grandiose. People around us sense our mood, and some may go into fight or flight themselves.

When we step back and widen our vision, we open our senses to the beauty and goodness that is always there, but tends to be invisible under stress. We remind ourselves that the negative feelings and foggy thinking will pass.

Recovery Tool 5: Exercise moderately.

Go for a quiet walk or jog, go outside and breathe fresh air.

A change of scenery can help. And moderate exercise can release some of that energy you brought to the center of your body. Shooting baskets, light lifting, walking the dog. Just be careful you don't go too hard, jack up your heart rate, and trigger the stress response again.

You have released enough adrenaline already!



Open yourself to fresh air, sunlight, healing energy.

SESSION 3: THE RECOVERY TOOLS

Recovery Tool 6: Pray, meditate, stretch, practice yoga, listen to mindfulness recordings

There are many calming activities that can help you quiet your mind and gain perspective, preventing another release of the stress hormones. Empowering questions can move us out of negative thought: *How do I calm my mind?*

Recovery Tool 7: Drink water and eat foods that increase your alkalinity.

Since we have dehydrated our large muscles and our brains, drinking water can really help us start to think more clearly as we rehydrate our cells. Most of us don't drink enough to begin with, so hydration can make a significant improvement.

Stress causes our bodies to become more acidic, which increases our susceptibility to illness, inflammation, anxiety, depression, and other unpleasant symptoms.

Eating green leafy vegetables, cucumbers, other vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds can help your body become less acid.



This can be challenging because when we are stressed, we tend to reach for things we think will give us instant comfort, like chocolate, alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes. These cause even more acid in our bodies, and some promote stress fat. We typically end up feeling even worse.

If you turn to cigarettes to calm yourself, see if by taking some long, slow breaths, you are able to slow your heart and calm yourself instead of smoking.

Recovery Tool 8: Be honest with those around you.

It is a good idea to inform the people with whom you live and work that you are becoming Pressure-Free. They are used to you reacting certain ways, and as you become more aware and stop reacting with fight-or-flight, they may be confused by your behavior! Plus you may be smiling a lot more than you used to.

When you do trigger your stress hormones, you can ask for their help to keep you from triggering your stress response again. If they care about you, they will hopefully be willing to help you! You can also explain why you need a walk, or to close your door for some privacy.

Recovery Tool 9: Know and trust that you can get over this!

You have been successful before and you *can* do it again now. Even if it feels impossible – remember that in this state you are not thinking clearly! Once I went so far under the line with such a huge release of adrenaline that I really thought I could never dig myself out again. And then I remembered that I wasn't thinking clearly, so of course my thoughts were going negative on me.

I cut myself a break, and strapped on my tool belt again, and used all of these recovery tools. My youngest son William, age 10 at the time, noticed I was different and asked me if I had gone under the line. He invited me to share what had happened and he gave me great reassurance! By the next day, I was clean again and back on my Pressure-Free path. You too, can recover. You have the tools now to get back on your Pressure-Free path!

FROM THE AUTHOR

I am deeply honored to have the opportunity to share Pressure-Free Living with you. I hope that you will let me know how this course has impacted your life. You can connect with me through my website www.pressure-freeliving.com. I hope that we have a chance to meet some day, if we haven't already met! Welcome to your Pressure-Free Life!

Sincerely,

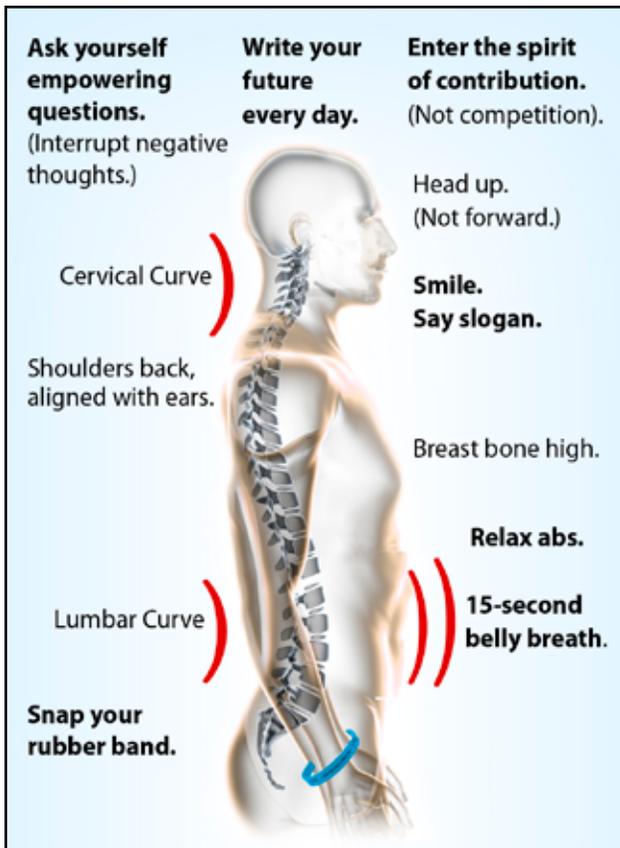


Elle Ingalls, CEO and Founder
Pressure-Free Living

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SUMMARY: THE JUMP START TOOLS



Starter Tool: Push your Ferris wheel when you notice the start of one of the four A's (Angry, Anxious, Annoyed, Ashamed).

The Nine Basic Tools

Tool 1: Relax your abdominal muscles.

Tool 2: Curves of Life perfect posture.

Tool 3: Take a 15-second belly breath.

Tool 4: Smile!

Tool 5: Say your slogan.

Tool 6: Interrupt negative thoughts with empowering questions.

Tool 7: Snap your rubber band.

Tool 8: Enter the Spirit of Contribution.

Tool 9: Write your future every day.

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Nine Recovery Tools:

Recovery Tool 1: Strap your tool belt back on!

Recovery Tool 2: Cut yourself a break.

Recovery Tool 3: Protect yourself and others from your stressed-out state.

Recovery Tool 4: Widen your vision.

Recovery Tool 5: Exercise moderately.

Recovery Tool 6: Pray, meditate, stretch, practice yoga, listen to recordings.

Recovery Tool 7: Drink water and eat foods that increase your alkalinity.

Recovery Tool 8: Be honest with those around you.

Recovery Tool 9: Trust that you can get over this!