

the
STRESS LESS
BOOKLET



LATTER DAY MISSIONARIES

“
TAKE CARE OF YOUR

BODY.

IT'S THE ONLY PLACE YOU HAVE TO

LIVE.”



QUOTE BY JIM ROHN

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Introduction

Stress is a natural part of life, and as a soon-to-be missionary or current missionary, you will inevitably experience stress in various forms. But what exactly is stress? We talk about this in great detail in Lesson 1 of **The Mental Health Training Center**. But as a quick recap, stress is the body's response to challenges or demands. It can manifest physically, emotionally, and behaviorally. When faced with a difficult situation, your body releases hormones like adrenaline and cortisol, which prepare you to take action. In short bursts, this response can be beneficial—helping you stay alert, motivated, and focused. However, prolonged stress without proper management can lead to fatigue, anxiety, and difficulty coping with daily tasks.

Stress can look different for everyone. Some common signs of stress include:

- Feeling overwhelmed or anxious
- Irritability or mood swings
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Physical symptoms like headaches, muscle tension, or upset stomach
- Changes in sleep patterns or appetite
- Feeling disconnected or unmotivated

It is important to recognize that not all stress is bad. Stress can push us to grow, help us meet challenges, and even keep us safe. However, when stress becomes overwhelming, it can lead to emotional, mental, and physical challenges that can affect your well-being and ability to serve effectively.

One great resource for understanding stress as a missionary is the [*Adjusting to Missionary Life*](#) booklet produced by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. We encourage you to check this resource out prior to your mission service! It provides excellent spiritual and practical tools for managing stress and introduces a helpful model called the *Four Levels of Stress*. This model divides patterns of stress into four color categories. Here they are:

- **Green:** You feel confident, happy, and ready to meet the challenges of missionary life. You are engaged, spiritually in tune, and functioning at your best.
- **Yellow:** You start to feel tense, worried, insecure, anxious, or unprepared. While still managing, you may notice physical or emotional discomfort and struggle with focus or motivation.
- **Orange:** You may feel exhausted, ill, easily angered, deeply discouraged, or unable to feel the Spirit. Stress may be interfering with your daily work and relationships.
- **Red:** You may experience persistent depression, panic or anxiety, hopelessness, or difficulty eating and sleeping. At this stage, stress is significantly impairing your ability to function and needs immediate attention.

Throughout your mission, you will likely experience different stress levels at different times. You might feel "orange" upon arriving at the MTC but shift to "green" as you adjust. These fluctuations are completely normal. The key is recognizing when stress begins to increase and knowing how to manage it effectively so that it does not become overwhelming. Understanding this model will help you assess where you are and take the necessary steps to return to a healthier, more balanced state.

This ***Stress Less Booklet*** serves as an additional resource for you future missionaries. By intentionally practicing these tools, you can help yourself stay in the “green” zone of stress, feeling confident, balanced, and spiritually connected. These tools can also assist in bringing you from a yellow, orange, or even red state back to a healthier, more peaceful place.

Managing stress effectively doesn’t happen by accident, it requires preparation and practice. It requires intentionality.

Not every tool in this booklet will work for you, and that’s okay! The goal is to find the ones that resonate with you and add them to your personal "mental health toolbox." Having tools ready when stress arises is crucial because it is difficult to learn new coping strategies when you are already in the orange or red stress zones. Practicing these techniques while you are in the green zone will help you use them effectively when you need them most.

As you prepare for your mission, take time to familiarize yourself with this booklet. Check out the *Adjusting to Missionary Life* in the Gospel Library App for additional information and tools!

The more you practice and develop your personal stress management plan, the better prepared you will be to handle the challenges and blessings of missionary service.

You are not alone in this journey. The Lord, your mission leaders, companions, family, and fellow missionaries are all here to support you. **By learning how to manage stress effectively, you can serve with greater joy, resilience, and spiritual strength.**

- The Latter Day Missionaries Team

Tool 1: Intentional Breathing

Have you ever noticed that when you're stressed, your breathing becomes shallow and rapid? This is because, as we talk about in Lesson 1 of **The Mental Health Training Center**, your body is in fight-or-flight mode, and it's trying to prepare you to react quickly to a potential threat. However, this rapid breathing can actually increase your stress levels and make you feel more anxious. That's where intentional breathing comes in!

On average, a healthy adult takes around 12 to 20 breaths per minute, which translates to approximately 17,000 to 30,000 breaths per day. Over the course of a year, this means that we take around 6 to 11 million breaths. And when we consider the span of a lifetime, the number of breaths we take is even more staggering.

Assuming an average lifespan of around 75 years, a person will take approximately 500 million breaths over the course of their lifetime. This number can vary depending on factors such as age, health, and activity level, but it serves as a reminder of just how important and integral breathing is to our existence. However, it's important to note that many people do not breathe properly or efficiently. Shallow breathing or breathing from the chest rather than the diaphragm can lead to increased stress and anxiety, as well as decreased oxygen intake and overall health.

Scientific research has shown that intentional breathing techniques can help to activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for regulating our body's "rest and digest" response. In essence, you can learn how to turn off your fight and flight stress response by intentionally breathing. This is powerful stuff!

By practicing deep breathing techniques, such as diaphragmatic breathing or box breathing, missionaries can improve their lung capacity and increase oxygen intake, leading to improved physical and mental health. Additionally, mindfulness practices such as meditation and yoga often emphasize the importance of breath control and can help us cultivate a greater awareness and appreciation for this essential bodily function.

Overall, intentional breathing techniques can be a simple yet powerful way to destress and promote relaxation. By taking a few minutes each day to focus on your breath, you can help to calm your mind and body and improve your overall well-being.

Check out the **Stay Grounded Booklet** in Lesson 7 to learn how to do a variety of breathing exercises that can help you stress less!

Tool 2: Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness meditation is a form of meditation that involves focusing on the present moment and cultivating a non-judgmental awareness of thoughts, emotions, and sensations. The practice has been shown to have numerous benefits, including reducing stress and anxiety, improving emotional regulation, and enhancing overall well-being.

The science behind mindfulness meditation is based on the concept of neuroplasticity, which refers to the brain's ability to change and adapt in response to new experiences. Studies have shown that regular mindfulness practice can lead to changes in the brain's structure and function, including increased activity in areas related to emotional regulation and decreased activity in areas associated with stress and anxiety.

To practice mindfulness meditation, there are several techniques you can try:

- Body scan meditation: This involves focusing on each part of your body, one at a time, and observing any sensations or discomfort without judgment.
- Breath awareness meditation: This involves focusing on your breath as it moves in and out of your body, and observing any thoughts or distractions that arise without judgment.
- Loving-kindness meditation: This involves cultivating feelings of compassion and kindness towards yourself and others, by repeating positive affirmations or visualizing positive outcomes.
- Mindful movement meditation: This involves incorporating movement, such as yoga or walking, into your mindfulness practice, and focusing on the sensations and movements of your body.

To get started with mindfulness meditation, find a quiet and comfortable place to sit or lie down, set a timer for a designated amount of time (such as 5 or 10 minutes), and begin to focus on your chosen technique. Remember that the goal is not to stop or suppress thoughts, but rather to observe them with curiosity and compassion. Over time, with consistent practice, you can cultivate a greater sense of awareness, peace, and well-being in your daily life.

Tool 3: Exercise

Exercise and movement have long been recognized as powerful tools for reducing stress and improving mental health. When we exercise, our bodies release endorphins, which are natural mood-boosters that help to decrease feelings of stress and anxiety. Additionally, exercise has been shown to reduce the levels of stress hormones such as cortisol in the body, leading to a greater sense of relaxation and calm.

Aerobic exercises, such as running and cycling, are particularly effective for reducing stress. These activities increase heart rate and oxygen flow, which can help to promote feelings of calm and relaxation. Strength training and yoga are also effective for reducing stress, as they help to release tension in the body and promote feelings of physical and mental strength.

Some ideas for exercising to destress include:

- Going for a brisk walk or jog
- Taking a yoga class or practicing yoga in your missionary apartment
- Participating in a group fitness class, such as spin or dance
- Trying a new physical activity, such as rock climbing or martial arts
- Taking a mindful walk or hike in nature, focusing on the sights, sounds, and sensations around you
- Dancing to your favorite music
- Doing bodyweight exercises, such as push-ups or squats, in your living room.

To reap the benefits of exercise for stress reduction, it's important to find activities that you enjoy and that fit into your schedule. Whether it's a daily walk around the block or a weekly yoga session on your preparation day, prioritizing movement and exercise can help to promote feelings of well-being and resilience in the face of stress.

For more exercise tips and tricks, check out the **Movement Matters Booklet**, associated with Lesson 7 in **The Mental Health Training Center**. This Booklet has multiple 4 week exercise routines that can be done both indoors and outdoors on your mission! It has a month long yoga routine if this is something you are interested in! It teaches you how to do many core and cardio exercise routines that can be done before, during and after your mission! Of course, you can customize these routines to your own needs as you listen to your body!

Tool 4: Sleep

Ah, sleep! The sweet, sweet escape from the chaos of the day. It's not just a luxury, it's a necessity. Getting quality sleep is essential for reducing stress and promoting overall well-being. When we sleep, our bodies have a chance to rest and repair, which can help to decrease stress hormones and improve our ability to cope with stressors in our daily lives. On the other hand, poor sleep can increase stress levels, leading to a vicious cycle of poor sleep and increased stress.

The science behind how sleep influences stress is complex, but research has shown that sleep deprivation can lead to increased levels of stress hormones, such as cortisol, in the body. This can lead to feelings of irritability, anxiety, and difficulty coping with stressors. Additionally, poor sleep can interfere with our ability to regulate emotions, leading to increased emotional reactivity and decreased resilience in the face of stress.

To improve the quality of your sleep and reduce stress, there are several things you can try:

- **Establish a regular sleep schedule:** Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends. Thankfully, the mission schedule is optimized for scheduled sleep!
- **Create a relaxing bedtime routine:** Take a warm bath, read a book, or practice gentle yoga to help your body and mind relax before bed. If you are in an area where you don't have access to a tub or warm water, consider heating up some water on the stove and taking a bucket shower!
- **Create a sleep-conducive environment:** Make sure your bedroom is cool, quiet, and dark, and invest in comfortable bedding and pillows.
- **Avoid screens before bedtime:** Blue light from electronic devices can interfere with your body's natural sleep-wake cycle, so try to avoid those mission phone screens for at least an hour before bed.
- **Limit caffeine intake:** Caffeine can interfere with sleep quality, so try to limit your intake, particularly in the hours leading up to bedtime.

By prioritizing quality sleep and practicing healthy sleep habits, you can improve your ability to cope with stress and enhance your overall well-being.

Pro-TIPS:

- ☐ Would highly recommend bringing ear plugs and eye covers on your mission!
- ☐ You could consider bringing a compact white noise machine for those noisy areas where your neighbors blast music all night long! **Sweet dreams, my friends!**

Tool 5: Time Management

Effective time management is a powerful tool for reducing stress and improving productivity. When we feel in control of our time, we are less likely to feel overwhelmed and stressed by the demands of our daily lives. Research has shown that effective time management can lead to increased feelings of control, decreased stress levels, and improved overall well-being.

One of the key benefits of effective time management is that it allows us to prioritize our tasks and focus on the most important and meaningful activities. By setting clear goals and priorities, we can avoid wasting time on low-value tasks and instead focus on the things that matter most to us.

To improve your time management skills and reduce stress, here are some suggestions:

1. **Create a to-do list:** Write down your tasks and prioritize them based on importance and urgency.
2. **Use a calendar or planner:** Block off time for important tasks and schedule breaks and downtime to help you recharge.
3. **Break large tasks into smaller ones:** This can help you avoid feeling overwhelmed and make it easier to focus on one task at a time.
4. **Avoid multitasking:** Instead, focus on one task at a time and give it your full attention.
5. **Learn to say no:** Saying no to low-priority tasks or activities can help you free up time for the things that matter most to you.

By taking steps to manage your time more effectively, you can reduce stress and increase your sense of control and well-being. **Remember, effective time management is not about doing more, but about doing what matters most with the time that you have.**

Tool 6: Setting Boundaries

Setting healthy boundaries is an essential tool for reducing stress and promoting overall well-being. When we set clear and appropriate boundaries, we are better able to protect our time, energy, and emotional well-being, which can help to reduce stress levels. On the other hand, poor boundaries can lead to increased stress, as we may feel overwhelmed, overcommitted, or taken advantage of by others.

The science behind the relationship between boundaries and stress is complex, but research has shown that setting and maintaining healthy boundaries can lead to increased feelings of control and decreased levels of stress. By setting clear limits on our time, energy, and emotional availability, we can reduce the likelihood of becoming overwhelmed or burned out.

To set healthy boundaries and reduce stress, here are some suggestions:

- **Identify your limits:** Take some time to reflect on your personal values, needs, and priorities, and identify the limits that are most important to you.
- **Communicate your boundaries clearly:** Be clear and direct when communicating your boundaries to others, and be willing to assertively and respectfully enforce them.
- **Learn to say no:** Saying no to requests or demands that do not align with your values or priorities can help you protect your time and energy.
- **Take time for self-care:** Prioritize self-care activities that help you recharge and maintain your emotional and physical well-being.
- **Seek support:** Talk to trusted companion, mission leader or a mental health professional about your struggles with setting boundaries and developing healthier patterns.

By setting healthy boundaries and learning to prioritize your own needs and well-being, you can reduce stress and enhance your overall quality of life.

Remember, setting boundaries is not selfish or unkind– it is a necessary tool for protecting your well-being and living a fulfilling life.

Tool 7: Time in Solitude

Are you feeling overwhelmed, frazzled, and in desperate need of some peace and quiet? Well, have no fear, because we've got just the destressing tool for you: time in solitude!

Taking some time for yourself can be one of the most powerful ways to de-stress and recharge your batteries. It's a chance to step away from the chaos of your day-to-day life and reconnect with yourself and your own needs.

So, what does "time in solitude" actually mean? Well, it can be different for everyone. Maybe it means taking a long walk in the park, soaking in a hot bath, or curling up with a good book. Or perhaps it means meditating, doing some gentle yoga, or simply sitting in silence and reflecting on your thoughts.

Whatever form it takes, time in solitude can be incredibly beneficial for your mental and emotional well-being. It gives you a chance to process your thoughts and feelings, gain clarity and perspective, and tap into your inner wisdom and intuition.

But here's the thing: many of us are so used to being "on" all the time that the idea of being alone with our thoughts can be a little scary. We might worry that we'll get bored, or that we'll start to dwell on negative things. But the truth is, time in solitude can actually help us let go of those negative thoughts and cultivate a sense of inner peace.

So, if you're feeling stressed out and in need of some "me time," don't be afraid to give time in solitude a try. You might be surprised at how much it helps!

Pro-TIP:

This tool might seem difficult on your mission where you have a companion with you 24/7. Don't be afraid to ask for a little space. You can communicate with your companion that you are in need of some quiet time and ask them to respect your boundaries. They can still be within sight and sound of you, but with some intentional effort, it can still feel like you have a safe space to sit with yourself in quiet and solitude.

Tool 8: Art Therapy

Art therapy is a form of therapy that uses creative expression as a way to improve mental and emotional well-being. It involves creating art as a means of exploring and understanding one's thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This can be a great way to reduce stress and anxiety, as well as improve self-awareness and self-esteem.

There are many different types of art therapy, from drawing and painting to sculpture and collage. You don't need to be an artist or have any prior experience to benefit from art therapy – it's all about the process of creating, not the end result.

The act of creating art can be incredibly calming and relaxing. It can help you to focus on the present moment, allowing you to let go of worries and distractions. Art therapy can also be a great way to express emotions that may be difficult to put into words. By creating something visual, you can gain a better understanding of your feelings and work through any difficult emotions.

In addition to reducing stress and anxiety, art therapy has also been shown to improve cognitive function and memory, reduce symptoms of depression, and increase overall well-being. So why not give it a try? Set aside some time for yourself to create some art – whether it's drawing, painting, or any other form of creative expression. You might be surprised at how much it can help you destress and improve your mental and emotional health.

Pro-TIP:

Bring some of your preferred art supplies with you on your mission if you have some luggage space. If you are limited in space, bring some extra money with you so you can purchase some art supplies once you get on your mission. This could be a sketch pad, some pens or colored pencils, pastels, etc.

Tool 9: Tai Chi

If you're looking for a low-impact exercise that can also help you de-stress, then Tai Chi might be the perfect tool for you! Here's why:

Tai Chi is an ancient Chinese martial art that is often practiced for its health benefits, including stress reduction. The practice involves slow, flowing movements that promote relaxation, balance, and flexibility.

One of the great things about Tai Chi is that it is accessible to people of all ages and fitness levels. The movements are gentle and low-impact, making it a great choice for people with injuries or limited mobility.

But Tai Chi isn't just about physical health - it also has mental benefits. The slow, deliberate movements help to calm the mind and promote a sense of inner peace. By focusing on your breath and the movements of your body, you can tune out distractions and relieve stress.

If you're interested in trying Tai Chi as a destressing tool, there are many resources available. You can find classes at community centers, gyms, and martial arts studios. You can also find instructional videos online that can guide you through the movements.

So why not give Tai Chi a try? It's a fun and relaxing way to de-stress, and you might just find that it becomes a regular part of your wellness routine!

There are many great instructional videos in how to do Tai Chi that you can look at before your mission! Once you have the basics down, you can engage in some Tai Chi as a destressing tool when the going gets tough!

Tool 10: Nature Walks

Sometimes the best way to unwind and destress is to get out of the mission apartment and take a walk in nature! Not only does spending time outside have physical health benefits, but it can also be a great way to clear your mind and reduce stress. While you are at it you can find some people to teach!

Research has shown that spending time in nature can lower cortisol levels, reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, and improve overall mood. So, why not take a break from your busy schedule and spend some time surrounded by trees, fresh air, and sunshine?

Going for a nature walk doesn't have to be a big production. Even a quick stroll around your local park can do wonders for your stress levels. While you're walking, try to take in your surroundings and appreciate the beauty of nature around you. You might be surprised at how calming and rejuvenating it can be!

If you want to make your nature walk even more of a destressing tool, try incorporating some mindfulness techniques. Pay attention to your breathing and the sensations in your body as you walk. Focus on the present moment and try to let go of any worries or stressors that may be weighing on your mind.

So, the next time you're feeling stressed and need a break, grab your walking shoes and head outside for a refreshing nature walk. Your body and mind will thank you!

Tool 11: Healthy Diet

Eating a balanced diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can help reduce stress and improve overall health.

Let's talk about how a healthy diet can help reduce stress and improve your overall well-being.

When we're stressed, it can be easy to reach for comfort foods like pizza or ice cream. But those foods might provide temporary relief, but they can actually make things worse in the long run.

Eating a balanced diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can help provide the nutrients your body needs to manage stress. For example, foods rich in vitamin C, like oranges and strawberries, can help lower cortisol levels, which is a hormone that's released when you're stressed. And complex carbohydrates, found in foods like brown rice and quinoa, can help boost serotonin levels, which can help improve mood and reduce anxiety.

It's also important to avoid skipping meals or relying on caffeine and sugar to get through the day. These habits can cause spikes and crashes in your energy levels, which can make it harder to manage stress. Instead, try to eat regular, balanced meals throughout the day to help keep your energy levels stable.

So remember, choosing a healthy diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can help reduce stress and improve your overall well-being. Bon appétit!

We talk more about healthy eating in Lesson 6 of **The Mental Health Training Center**. Check out **The Latter Day Missionaries Cook Book** for a ton of healthy meals you can cook on your mission!

Tool 12: Social Support

It's true what they say: no one is an island! Connecting with others is essential to our well-being, especially when it comes to managing stress. When we feel supported and connected, it's easier to handle life's challenges without feeling overwhelmed.

Research has shown that social support can help reduce stress levels and promote feelings of emotional and physical well-being. The science behind this relationship suggests that social support can help individuals better cope with stressors by providing a sense of security, emotional validation, and practical assistance.

To strengthen your social connections and increase your social support, here are some suggestions:

- **Connect with others regularly:** Whether it's through email with friends, by phone on your p-days, a missionary sports team, or with fellow missionaries in your district or zone, make an effort to regularly connect with others who share your interests and values.
- **Cultivate positive relationships:** Prioritize relationships with people who are supportive, positive, and nurturing.
- **Practice active listening:** Engage in active listening when speaking with others to build rapport and show empathy.
- **Offer support to others:** By offering support and help to others, you may also receive support and help when you need it.
- **Seek professional help:** If you're struggling with social support, consider seeking the help of a mental health professional who can provide guidance and support. Reach out to your Mission Leaders if you feel like you are struggling!

By strengthening your social connections and building a supportive network of friends, family, and community members, you can reduce stress and promote overall well-being.

Pro-TIP:

Remember, social support is a two-way street—by giving support, you can also receive support when you need it most.

Tool 13: Journaling

Journaling is a powerful tool for reducing stress and promoting emotional well-being. The act of writing down one's thoughts and feelings can help individuals process their emotions, gain perspective, and develop a greater sense of clarity and control over their lives.

The science behind journaling and stress reduction suggests that by writing about one's emotions, individuals can experience decreased levels of anxiety, improved mood, and better overall psychological health. Journaling can also help individuals identify patterns in their thinking and behavior, leading to greater self-awareness and insight.

To use journaling as a way to destress, here are some suggestions:

- **Make it a daily habit:** Set aside a regular time each day to sit down and write in your journal, even if it's just for a few minutes.
- **Write without judgment:** Allow yourself to write freely and without judgment. Remember, journaling is a tool for self-expression, not perfection.
- **Focus on your emotions:** Write about your emotions and how they are impacting your life. Reflect on what is causing your stress and consider potential solutions.
- **Practice gratitude:** Write down things you are grateful for each day. This can help shift your focus from negative to positive and promote feelings of well-being.
- **Experiment with different techniques:** Try different techniques such as guided journal prompts, creative writing, or bullet journaling to find what works best for you.

By incorporating journaling into your daily routine, you can reduce stress and promote emotional well-being. Remember, journaling is a personal and private practice—there are no right or wrong ways to do it. Focus on using journaling as a tool to connect with your emotions and develop greater insight into your inner world.

Pro-TIP:

Check out the **Journaling For Missionaries Booklet** available in Lesson 10!

Tool 14: Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is a technique that involves tensing and relaxing various muscle groups to help reduce stress and promote relaxation. The science behind PMR suggests that by releasing muscle tension, individuals can also release mental tension and experience a greater sense of calm and relaxation.

To practice PMR, follow these steps:

- **Find a quiet, comfortable place:** Sit or lie down in a quiet, comfortable place where you can relax without distractions.
- **Focus on your breathing:** Take a few deep breaths, focusing on the sensation of air moving in and out of your body.
- **Tense and relax muscle groups:** Starting with your toes, gradually tense and relax each muscle group in your body, holding each for 5-10 seconds before releasing.
- **Move systematically through your body:** Move systematically through your body, tensing and releasing muscle groups in your feet, legs, buttocks, stomach, back, arms, and face.
- **Focus on the sensation of relaxation:** As you release each muscle group, focus on the sensation of relaxation spreading through your body.
- **Repeat as needed:** Practice PMR for 10-15 minutes or as long as it takes to feel relaxed and calm.

By practicing PMR regularly, individuals can develop greater body awareness and learn to release muscle tension more easily, reducing stress and promoting relaxation. Remember, PMR is a simple yet powerful technique that can be practiced anywhere, anytime, making it an ideal tool for stress management.

Tool 15: Challenging Negative Thought Patterns

Challenging negative thought patterns is a technique rooted in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) that can help reduce stress and anxiety by changing the way we think about stressful situations. The science behind this technique suggests that negative thoughts can contribute to the experience of stress and anxiety by creating a sense of helplessness and hopelessness.

To practice challenging negative thought patterns, follow these steps:

1. **Identify negative thoughts:** Start by identifying negative thoughts that are contributing to your stress or anxiety. These might be thoughts like, "I'll never be able to get everything done" or "I'm not good enough."
2. **Evaluate the evidence:** Once you've identified your negative thoughts, evaluate the evidence for and against them. Are they based on facts or assumptions? Are there any alternative explanations or perspectives?
3. **Challenge the thought:** Using the evidence you've gathered, challenge the negative thought by coming up with a more realistic and balanced alternative thought. For example, "I may not be able to get everything done, but I can prioritize and focus on what's most important."
4. **Practice the new thought:** Repeat the new, more realistic thought to yourself regularly, and try to focus on it instead of the negative thought. With time and practice, the new thought will become more automatic and natural, reducing stress and anxiety.

By challenging negative thought patterns, individuals can learn to reframe their thinking and reduce the stress and anxiety that often accompanies negative thinking. Remember, this technique takes practice and persistence, but can be a powerful tool for managing stress and improving mental health.

Tool 16: Taking Breaks

Taking breaks throughout the day can be a powerful way to reduce stress and improve overall productivity. When we are constantly working or dealing with stressful situations, our bodies and minds can become exhausted and overwhelmed.

Taking a break can provide a much-needed mental and physical break, giving us time to recharge and reduce stress levels. The science behind this suggests that taking breaks can help restore our attention and focus, reduce mental fatigue, and improve our mood.

Here are some suggestions for taking little meaningful breaks throughout the day:

- **Take a walk:** Taking a short walk, even for just a few minutes, can help clear your mind, increase blood flow, and reduce stress.
- **Practice deep breathing:** Taking a few deep breaths can help calm your mind and body, reducing stress and anxiety.
- **Engage in a mindful activity:** Engage in an activity that requires your full attention, such as coloring or knitting. This can help you to focus and reduce stress.
- **Connect with others:** Take a few minutes to connect with another missionary or investigator friend, either in person or via text or phone call. Social connection can help reduce stress and boost mood.
- **Take a power nap:** A short nap of 10-30 minutes can help recharge your energy levels and improve focus.

It's important to remember that taking a break doesn't mean avoiding responsibilities or neglecting important tasks. Instead, it's about finding ways to take care of yourself and manage stress levels in a healthy way. By taking breaks regularly and prioritizing self-care, you can improve your overall well-being and be better equipped to handle stress when it arises.

Taking breaks throughout the day is not a waste of time, but rather an investment in your overall health and productivity.

By taking regular breaks, you can reduce stress and improve your ability to focus and perform at your best.

Tool 17: Yoga

Welcome to the world of yoga! This ancient practice has been used for centuries as a way to balance the body, mind, and spirit. It's a fantastic way to reduce stress and anxiety while also building strength and flexibility.

Yoga is a mind-body practice that combines physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation or relaxation. The science behind yoga suggests that it can reduce stress by decreasing levels of the stress hormone cortisol, as well as reducing anxiety and depression symptoms. Some of the benefits of practicing yoga include: reduced stress and anxiety, increased flexibility and strength, improved posture and balance, better sleep and increased mindfulness and focus. One of the best things about yoga is that it can be done anywhere, anytime. You don't need any special equipment or a lot of space to get started. All you need is a yoga mat, comfortable clothes, and a willingness to try something new. Here are some suggestions on how to start doing yoga:

- **Find a class or online video:** Many yoga studios offer beginner classes or you can find online yoga videos for beginners.
- **Start with gentle poses:** Begin with gentle yoga poses that are easy to perform, such as child's pose, downward-facing dog, or mountain pose.
- **Focus on your breath:** Yoga is also about breath control, so try to focus on deep breathing as you move through the poses.
- **Practice regularly:** Consistency is key when it comes to reaping the stress-reducing benefits of yoga. Start by practicing a few times a week and gradually increase the frequency as you become more comfortable.

Remember, yoga is a personal practice and there is no right or wrong way to do it. The most important thing is to listen to your body and do what feels good for you. With regular practice, yoga can be a powerful tool to reduce stress and improve overall health and wellbeing.

If you're new to yoga, it's a good idea to start with a beginner's class or a video that focuses on the basics. This will help you learn proper alignment and breathing techniques so you can get the most out of your practice.

As you progress, you can try different types of yoga, such as vinyasa or restorative yoga, to find what works best for you. And remember, there's no right or wrong way to do yoga. It's all about listening to your body and doing what feels good.

Pro-TIP: Check out the **Movement Matters Booklet** in Lesson 7 for a 4-week yoga routine!

Tool 18: Gratitude

Gratitude is a powerful tool for destressing that can be easily incorporated into your daily routine. Studies have shown that regularly practicing gratitude can lead to a decrease in stress, anxiety, and depression. Gratitude helps to shift our focus away from the negative aspects of our lives and towards the positive, which can lead to a more optimistic outlook and greater resilience in the face of stress.

One way to practice gratitude is to keep a gratitude journal. Each day, take a few minutes to write down three things that you are grateful for. These can be big things, like the support of loved ones, or small things, like a warm cup of tea on a cold day. By focusing on the good things in your life, you'll start to notice more of them and appreciate them more fully.

Another way to practice gratitude is to express it to others. Take time to thank the people in your life who have helped you or made a positive impact on you. Write a thank you note, send a text, or make a phone call. Not only will expressing gratitude make you feel good, but it will also strengthen your relationships and bring more positivity into your life.

So, the next time you're feeling stressed, take a moment to focus on the things you're grateful for.

You might be surprised at how much it can help!

Tool 19: Positive Affirmations

Positive affirmations are statements that you repeat to yourself to help you believe in the power of your own abilities and strengths. These affirmations are usually short, positive, and specific, such as **"I am capable and confident," "I am worthy of love and respect,"** or **"I trust in myself and my abilities."**

Research has shown that practicing positive affirmations can help to reduce stress and anxiety, boost your mood, and improve your overall well-being. By repeating positive statements to yourself, you can reprogram your thoughts to focus on the positive aspects of your life, rather than the negative ones. This can help to increase your self-esteem, confidence, and resilience in the face of stress and adversity.

To use positive affirmations, choose a few statements that resonate with you and repeat them to yourself regularly. You can say them out loud or silently to yourself, and you can practice them throughout the day, such as when you wake up in the morning, during your commute, or before bed at night. The key is to focus on the positive, and to repeat the affirmations with conviction and belief in their truth.

Remember, positive affirmations are just one tool in your stress management toolbox, but they can be a powerful one. So take a few moments to practice some affirmations right now, and see how they can help to lift your mood and reduce your stress levels. You got this!

Tool 20: Stretching

Did you know that stretching is a great way to reduce stress? When you're feeling tense, your muscles can become tight and uncomfortable, leading to even more stress. But taking a few minutes to stretch can help relieve tension and leave you feeling more relaxed and refreshed.

Stretching helps to increase blood flow to your muscles, which can help reduce muscle tension and improve flexibility. It also helps to reduce your heart rate and blood pressure, which can help you feel more calm and relaxed.

There are many different types of stretches you can do, from simple neck and shoulder stretches to more advanced yoga poses. No matter what kind of stretching you choose, the key is to focus on your breath and take your time. Don't force yourself into any positions that feel uncomfortable, and remember to breathe deeply and slowly throughout your stretches

Pro-TIP:

Check out the **Movement Matters Booklet**, associated with Lesson 7 in **The Mental Health Training Center**. This Booklet has multiple 4 week exercise routines that can be done both indoors and outdoors on your mission! It has a month long yoga routine if this is something you are interested in! It teaches you how to do many core and cardio exercise routines that can be done before, during and after your mission! Each workout incorporates a variety of stretches into it! You can customize these routines to your own needs as you listen to your body!

“

STRESS IS CAUSED BY BEING

‘HERE’

BUT WANTING TO BE

‘THERE.’”



QUOTE BY ECKHART TOLLE