



Stress management

From self-observation to personal stress management strategies

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The role of identity

Stress is a psychological and physiological reaction and protection mechanism of every human being. It exists of the interplay between the demands of the environment and the personality of the respective individual.

The personality can

- ▶ be the source of stress itself
- ▶ be supporting in problematic situations
- ▶ manage every stress level by its flexibility

The “flexible stability” of the personality is connected to the balance of mind and respective identities.

Personal identity

- ▶ underwent individuality during periods of time
- ▶ unit of self-perception, self-confidence and experience of the own efficiency

The type of desirable identity changes by society. During the medieval age, social ranks were defined by the social class system. Lifestyle, cloths, living, celebrations, marriages, religion – everything was under the control of that system. Independence rose with the period of industrialization and career choices, partner choices, political and religious freedom of expression and leisure activities has been getting more and more autonomous. Role allocation is defining and very important for adolescents and therefore irrevocable.

Nowadays, everything seems possible in industrialized countries. It does not matter who you want to marry, if you want to marry, if you want to life in a shared apartment or which decisions you make for your life – you take your own decisions. Life courses are flexible and decisions are revisable. The learned occupation is no longer mandatory and the center of self-definition.

Every person has to switch permanently between various situations, which require different parts of the personality. The united, stable and inflexible identity from previous centuries is about to change into a dynamic, multiple and flexible one. The split-up into separate but still interacting identity parts is necessary and alterable during a human’s lifetime.

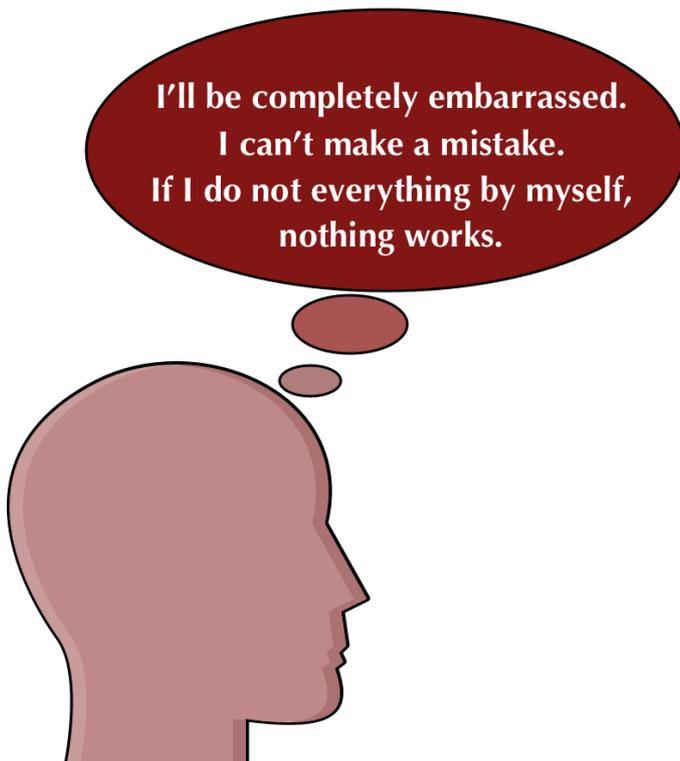
This form of identity is called patchwork identity.

Changes of identity and identity crisis can influence parts of a personality. The remaining and intact parts are the source of power, support and fulfillment of meaning for a person. The various opportunities of today`s lifestyle and extended scopes show up a widespread range of chances for everybody. The variability of these chances (including: easy to risky) requires a life-long work on one`s own identity. Among material, social and psychological resources it is necessary to be attentive, open to new experiences and flexible benefit from all opportunities. It takes a lot of power and energy in everyday life. Discretion as insider`s view and relaxation can counterbalance the caused tension.

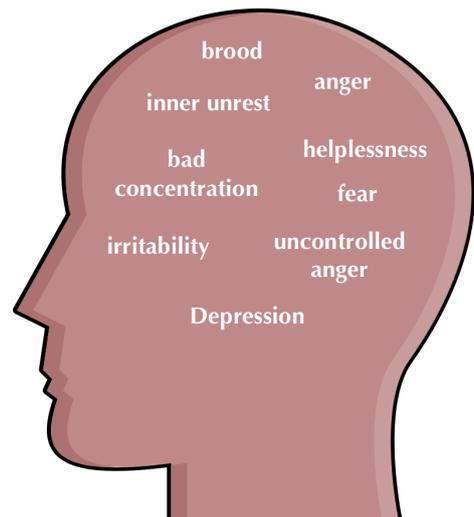
Nowadays, it is necessary to be focused on the own personality to create a well-structured life.

Stress signals

...expressed by thoughts



...expressed by emotions

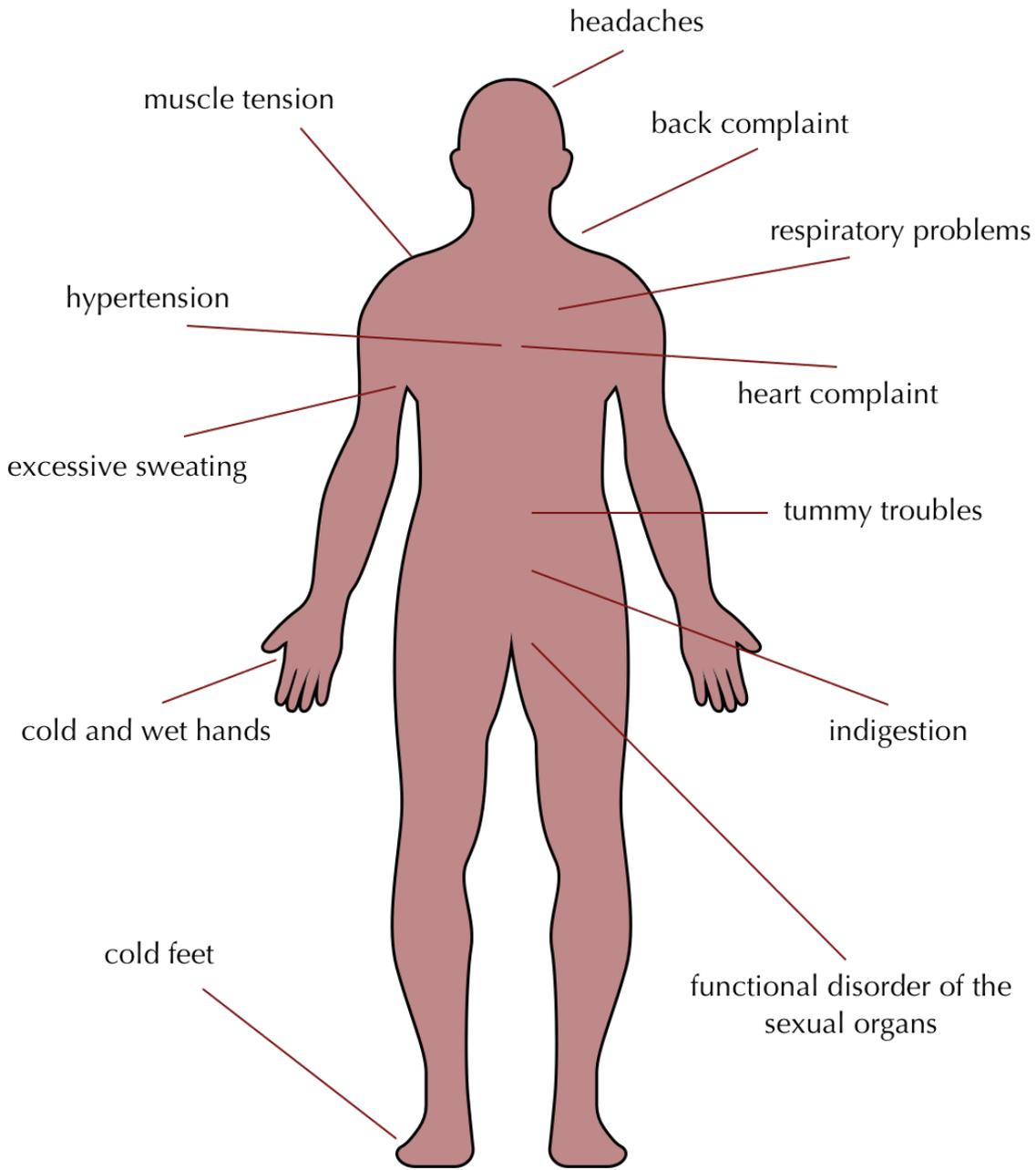


...expressed by manner

- ▶ going faster
- ▶ speaking louder and upset
- ▶ shaking hands
- ▶ acting impulsively
- ▶ no breaks
- ▶ saying nothing
- ▶ try to do several things at the same time

- ▶ smoking more cigarettes
- ▶ feel sleepless
- ▶ not able to decide between important and unessential things
- ▶ neglect friends and hobbies

...expressed by psychosomatic reactions



How you can learn stress management

Analysis of your stress level: quick test

Test yourself: the quick test shows up your individual stress level.

Answer the following statements. Cross where applicable.	1 not the case	2 few accordance	3 more likely	4 applies
I am feeling rushed, imprisoned or cornered.				
Sometimes I am asking myself, if the worth making effort.				
I am permanently feeling discontent and anger.				
I often wake up in the night or be awake a long time before I have to get out of the.				
I am still tired and listless after holidays or breaks.				
Some aspects/ personal issues of my life making me upset – only by thinking about them.				
I am not able to attract attention during any discussions or conversations.				
<p>Total score: Determine the score by adding the separate numbers</p>				

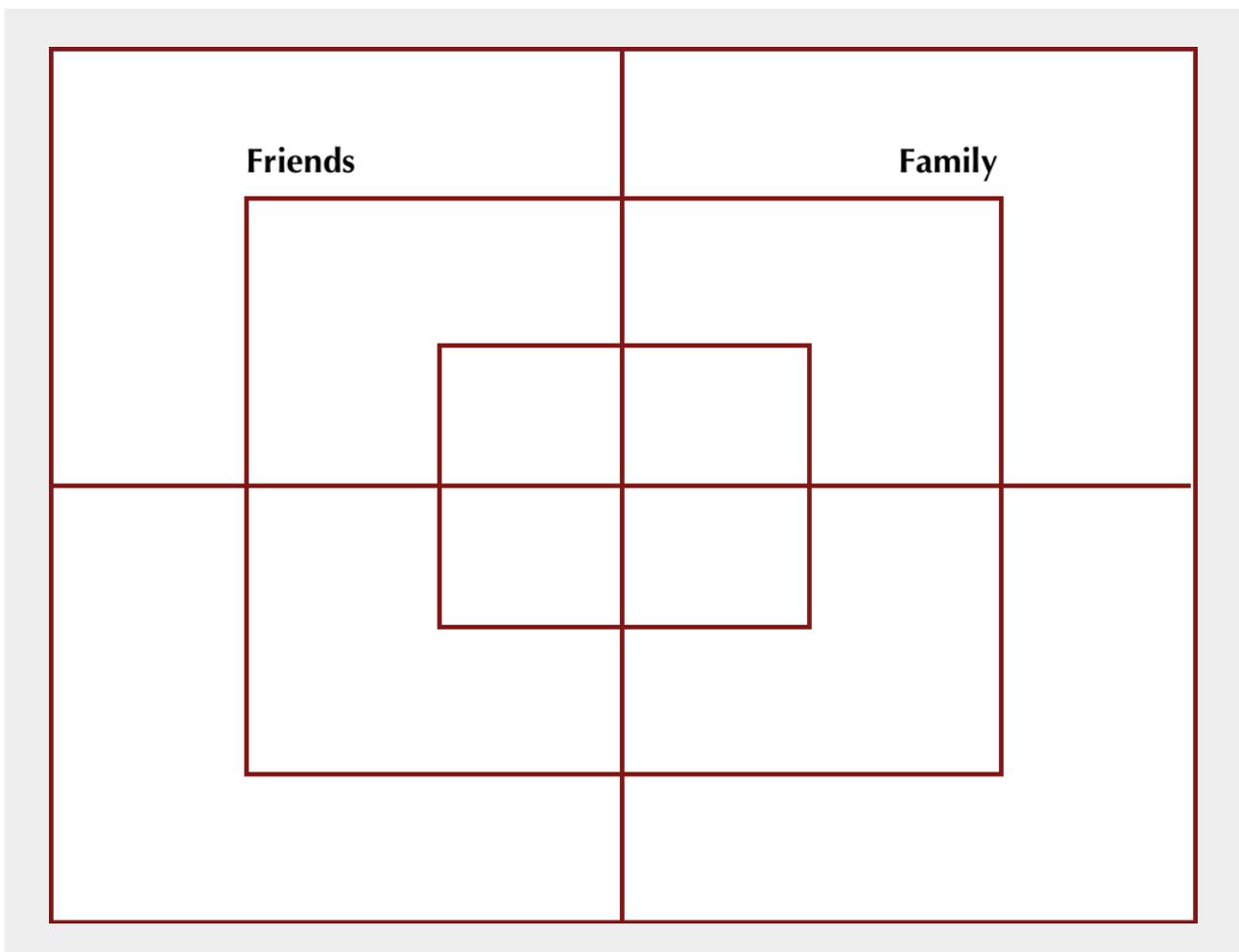
How to use stress management techniques on a daily basis

The role of social relationships

Social safety as support

Learn

- ▶ Relationships are important
- ▶ Demonstrate interest
- ▶ Ask for help
- ▶ Spend time with friends/ family



Draw symbols, initial letters or first names into your personal framework of relationships.

Deep breathing

Controlled and deep breathing is an essential technique for the reduction of stress. The way of breathing has an effect on the tension of muscles, thoughts and feelings.

Most common breathing techniques:

1. Conscious breathing

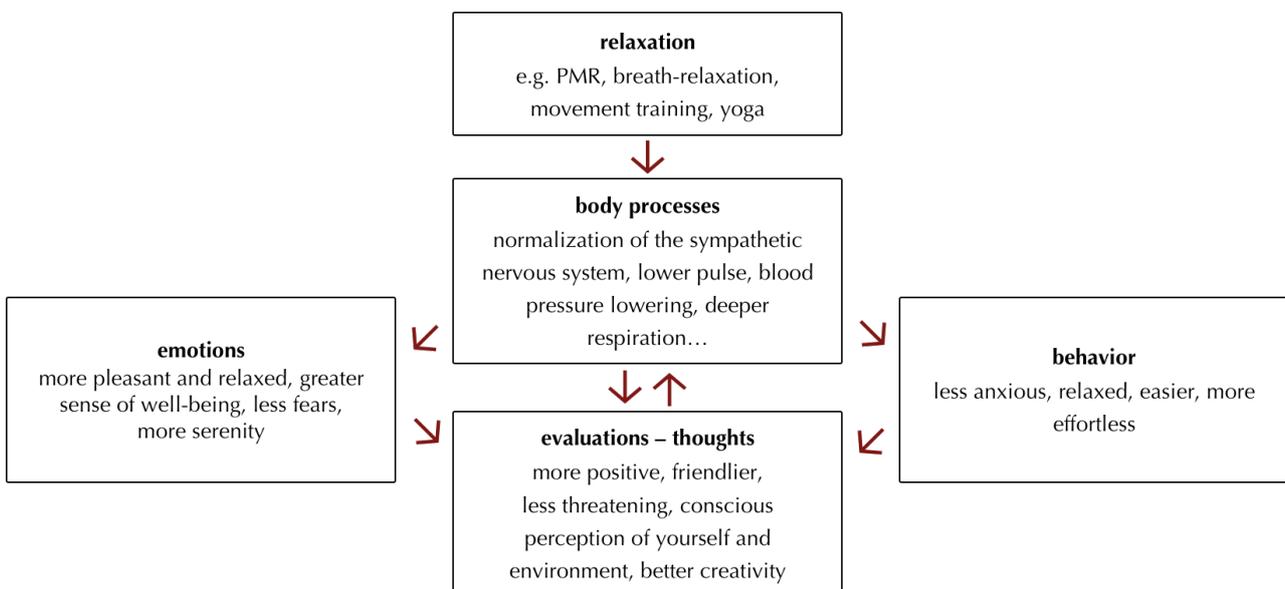
- ▶ interrupt the stress situation and make a break
- ▶ breath slowly through the nose
- ▶ now breathe deeply and feel how the lungs expand
- ▶ exhale slowly and repeat this process till your reached a normal and regular breathing
- ▶ be focused on your breathing; feel comfortable

2. Anti-stress exercise

- ▶ relax your arms and shoulders
- ▶ describe circles with your head first to the right, than to the left
- ▶ close your eyes, breathe deeply. Repeat the exercise.
- ▶ Be focused on your breathing, disregard stressful thoughts

You can perform these exercises everywhere (during breaks, in a waiting room, etc.) without an interruption of your daily schedule. Make use of the information and exercises to reduce your stress level.

Function of relaxation



The signal location technique

In the following you will find an idea or method to integrate relaxation breaks into your daily routine. For this method you will need circular and colored stickers.



What you need to do with these stickers

Stick the dots on items of your everyday life. But consider: You should see these items regular but not too often.

Imagine these stickers as traffic light. The light is green – you drive. The light is red – you stop. Therefore, every time you spot one of your stickers you stop and pause.

What you have to do when you spot one of your stickers?

Focus on your body and estimate your actual stress level.

Take a deep breathe. Repeat it a couple of times.

Observe yourself. You feel more relaxed and you will recognize that your muscle tensions dissipate.

Now assess your stress level.

Go on with your daily routine.

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