



Coyote
Management
International



It's not what you're eating, it's what's eating you!

- **Featured Speaker – Mark McKeon**



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark McKeon lives the life most of us dream about. His company 'Mischief, Motivation, Attitude' provides conference, training and coaching services to organizations around the world, but Mark works only 30hrs per week, and takes 10 weeks annual holiday.

Destressing

You've had a hard day, and despite your best efforts, you are stressed. No point denying it, let's just do something about it.

Crash, Boom, Bang. There is something on the roof. Instantly you're awake, alert and ready for action. Less than a second ago you were sound asleep, but the quick fire release of adrenaline and free floating fatty acids into your bloodstream has catapulted you out of bed without the slightest need for a yawn, stretch or scratch. You can feel your heart pounding in your chest.

That's what stress is. It's a physical response to some sort of emotional stimulus. A stress response is a positive thing if it helps you avoid a crazy driver in peak hour traffic or jump out of the way of a falling rock. However, it's far from positive when a stress response occurs every time you hear the noise of your mobile phone's message beeper, when you are late for a meeting or you find yourself faced with too many tasks and not enough time to complete them. This is when stress becomes a chronic condition.

Addicted to Busy?

Yes, some stress is good, but so is snake venom. Too much stress means excess adrenaline and floating fatty acids, usually creating headaches, irritability, abdominal discomfort and a feeling of jumpiness. You'd think that symptoms like that would be enough to put us off going through the same routine the next day, but the stress response can actually be quite addictive. Adrenaline is a powerful drug. Being continually busy and under pressure makes us feel needed and important. That's a temptation that can very easily turn into a need. Stress is very seductive.

We may not be able to bend spoons by telepathy, but we all have the ability to relax if we send the right signals. Elevated blood pressure can be caused when our deep muscles squeeze and constrict our blood vessels, thus making it harder for the blood to force its way through. The heart responds by increasing its rate (the heart can't beat harder, only faster) therefore creating more force to push the blood through the narrower blood vessels, causing what we know as high blood pressure.



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Here are 3 exercises to try:

1. The first exercise is called 'tick-Toc-watch'. It involves focusing on the second hand on your watch, and in your mind, imagining it circling the dial progressively more slowly and slowly until you've watched the dial for a full 2 minutes. If you have a digital watch, just focus on the ascending numbers. You are simply sending signals to your conscious mind to slow your heart and lower your blood pressure (by relaxing those deep muscles). Even without practice, people are routinely able to lower their heart rate by as much as 10 beats per minute and lower their diastolic blood pressure (between heartbeats) by 8mmhg. It works.

2. This exercise is designed to reduce surface muscle tension. The best method is to circle your hands in front of your chest, just like the action of reeling in a fish, except that your hands wind under and over each other. Wind slowly in for 30 seconds and wind out for 30 seconds. Now place your right forearm on top of your left shoulder. With your left hand, grasp the rear upper part of your right arm and gently push it under your chin. This will provide a very thorough, tension reducing stretch for your right shoulder. Hold for 30 seconds. Next it's back to a minute of wind up, unwind and then relax your left shoulder by reversing the stretch and scaring the passenger on your right.

3. The remaining challenge is to soak up some of those excess fatty acids and adrenaline. We can't achieve this passively. We have to burn them up, preferably as soon as possible and certainly within 6 hours of the initial stress response. You need 10 minutes of moderate intensity exercise. It's the only way. Sweat or regret. If you don't burn up the adrenaline it will dissipate only in the process of hardening and narrowing your arteries not a good option.

If you are stressed in the morning, go for a walk at lunchtime. All you have to lose is your anger. If you are stressed in the afternoon, go home and chase the dog around for 10 minutes. Hit a few golf balls at the range, hop on an exercise bike or walk twice around the block.

Don't stew in your own juices and don't rely only on alcohol to destress, at least not every time.

There is a better way and you now know all you need to make it work for you.