**Stress Management Journal – Part Two**

Instructions

1. Explore the stress management journal you have been working on and look for repetitive stress symptoms and reoccurring stress triggers. These will be noticeable as the same or similar times or experiences that caused you to experience the symptoms of stress.
2. Make a note of the most common stress symptoms you experienced in the symptoms column below.
3. Make a note of the reoccurring stress reactions into the corresponding column below. The stress reaction is the thing, event, situation or person you perceived as having caused the stress.
4. Sort the stress reaction into two columns: unavoidable stress and avoidable stress. Take your time to evaluate your options. Is the stress reaction something that you could get rid of, or is it something that has to stay in your life?
5. Look at each stress reaction individually and use the brainstorming column to note ideas for addressing the situations listed in the avoidable stress column. What things could you do to eliminate or reduce contact with this stress reaction? This way, we are looking for ways to eliminate or minimise your stress.
6. When you have brainstormed ideas for each avoidable stress reaction, explore each approach and decide how possible and productive it is. Place the ideas for solutions you feel might be useful in the action column.
7. Now, look at the situations you have listed in the unavoidable stress column. These are stressful situations that you have decided can not be changed or avoided. See if you can move any into the avoidable stress column and brainstorm ideas for addressing them.
8. The stress reactions that remain in the unavoidable stress column now require a method of management. Look at the symptoms of stress you have listed as common. Go back to your stress journal and notice the most common symptoms you experience when faced with these unavoidable stress reactions.
9. Now consider what action you can take to minimise the *effects* of these stress reactions.

Some ideas might include practising relaxation exercises before the stress reaction occurs.

1. If any stress reactions are remaining in the unavoidable stress column, make a note in the action column about why you feel this stress reaction is unavoidable.

What we are looking for here are the regular situations that cause you to experience the stress response.

We are doing this by examining the information you recorded on your stress journal in module two. We are then attempting to eliminate or at least reduce the instances of these situations occurring.

If we cannot eliminate or reduce the instances of these situations, we will be looking for ways to better deal with the anticipated stress response their occurrence causes.

*Below is an example*

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| **Symptoms**  **of stress** | **Stressors** | **Is this an avoidable or an unavoidable stressor?** | **Brainstorming** | **Action** |
| Tight neck muscles  Rapid breathing  Increased heart rate | Talking to a demanding client on the phone at work | Unavoidable.  I have to deal with the client. | Put ideas here for ways the effects of this unavoidable stressor could be addressed | Put what things could be done to improve the situation next time in here, e.g.: practice deep breathing  Do muscle relaxation exercise while talking to the client |
| Tight neck muscles  Headache  Rapid breathing  Increased heart rate  Anger  Grinding teeth | Stuck in traffic on the way to work | Avoidable | Leave for work earlier to miss the rush and remove the fear of being late  OR  Start catching public transport to work and read self-development books while in transit | Rather than implementing skills for avoiding or disengaging a stress response, this stressor is avoidable and requires a change in our ideas or routine...the answer here might be ...get a bus time table, a good book and give public transport a go. |

**Your stress management journal assessment**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Symptoms  of stress | Stress reaction | Is this an avoidable or unavoidable reaction? | Brainstorming | Action |
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