



Deeper Dive Consulting

Identifying and Eliminating Stress at the Source

Often it's not good enough to just address the symptoms of stressful situations. Yes learning stress management techniques can really help relieve stress temporarily, but if you want to permanently live with less stress, more productivity and more happiness, you'll need to identify and eliminate stress at the source.

What's Causing Stress in Your Life?

The actual factors that are causing stress in your life may or may not be consciously recognized yet, even to yourself. It's possible that you may be aware of the biggest stressor in your life, but many other smaller stressors can add up. It's even possible that there are large stressors in your life that you're not even aware of yet.

To eliminate these stressors, it's crucial that you take honest inventory of what's really causing you stress. How do you do this?

Psychologists have invented a technique called the "hourly checks" to help identify specific stress inducers. Here's how it works.

Purchase a watch or phone that can be set to ring an alarm every hour of the day. Carry a small notepad and pen with you at all times.

Every time the alarm rings, open the notepad and write down a number from 1 to 10, ranking how stressed you are.

Anytime the number goes up, write down just *one or two sentences* why you think the number went up. If the number goes down, write one or two sentences on why you think the number went down.

Keep this up for a whole week. Then look back on your journal.

Tallying the Stress Points

You might be surprised at the difference between what you *thought* was stressing you and what's *actually* stressing you.

For example, you might have thought that all your stress was work related, but in reality a disagreement with your spouse may have actually occupied most of your attention. Without

writing down what you were really thinking when stress went up, it'd be very hard to identify the source.

Tally up all the different causes of stress in your life and identify the most stress inducing ones.

Eliminating Stress at the Source

Once you know what's causing you stress, how do you eliminate the stress from your life?

The first step is to take accountability. Any time you're pointing fingers outside of yourself, you effectively remove all your power to do anything about the situation.

Even if you think your stress is "someone else's fault," look at what you could change in the situation.

The next step is to come up with a plan. Write the plan down, even if you don't show it to anybody.

You don't have to take action on the plan right away. For example, if your boss's habit of tossing projects at you last minute is causing you stress but you don't think it's the right time to bring it up yet, that's okay. A lot of stress can be relieved *just from knowing* that you have a concrete plan to address the issue.

The last step is, of course, to eliminate the source of the stress. This often involves having difficult and honest conversations.

Rinse and repeat this process. While you might never get to a place where there's absolutely no stress in your life, a lot of stressors can be eliminated from your life by following this process.