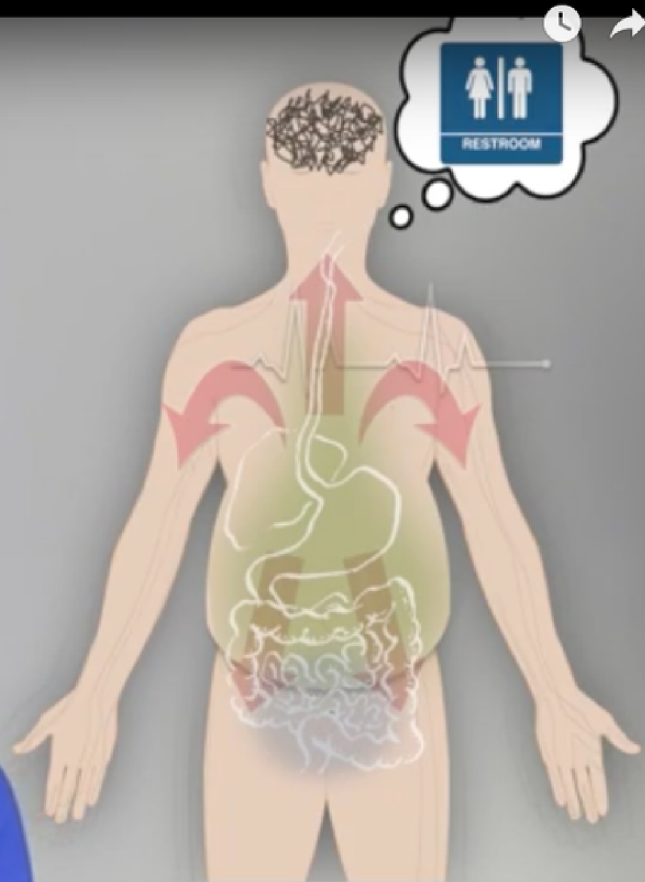


# SESSION ONE

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STRESS RESPONSE

- What Stress Really Does to You.
- The 3-step Pressure-Free Method.
- The ABC's of Pressure-Free.
- Celebration Ferris Wheel.



# SESSION ONE

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STRESS RESPONSE

### **Understanding the stress response gives you the power to make changes.**

In this first session, you'll learn about many of the physiological and psychological effects of the stress response. You will understand how the stress response is affecting your health, relationships, performance, and outlook, and how your biology affects your psychological health and vice versa.

You'll learn about the side effects of the stress response. Each person experiences stress differently based on genetics, family culture, body tendencies, and many other factors. People often judge each other based on the behaviors the stress response causes us to exhibit. After this session, you will have a greater understanding and awareness.

You'll learn the three steps of the Pressure-Free Method so that you can immediately begin reducing the release of stress hormones.

And I'll share a framework that I call the ABC's of Pressure-Free, a simple way to become aware of the stress response and how its affecting your life.

We'll close out this session with your starter tool: The Celebration Ferris Wheel.

As we go about our day, our brain is constantly evaluating stimuli inside us and around us and sending signals to our body. This happens without conscious thought on our part. When the brain perceives a threat, it engages the fight-or-flight stress response.

This pattern goes back thousands of years, to the days when sabre-toothed tigers and hostile tribes roamed the earth.

For example, if we suddenly realize that we are in the path of a speeding car or under attack by a dog, the stress response focuses all of our mind's and body's resources on escape or on defending ourselves. This is a good thing.

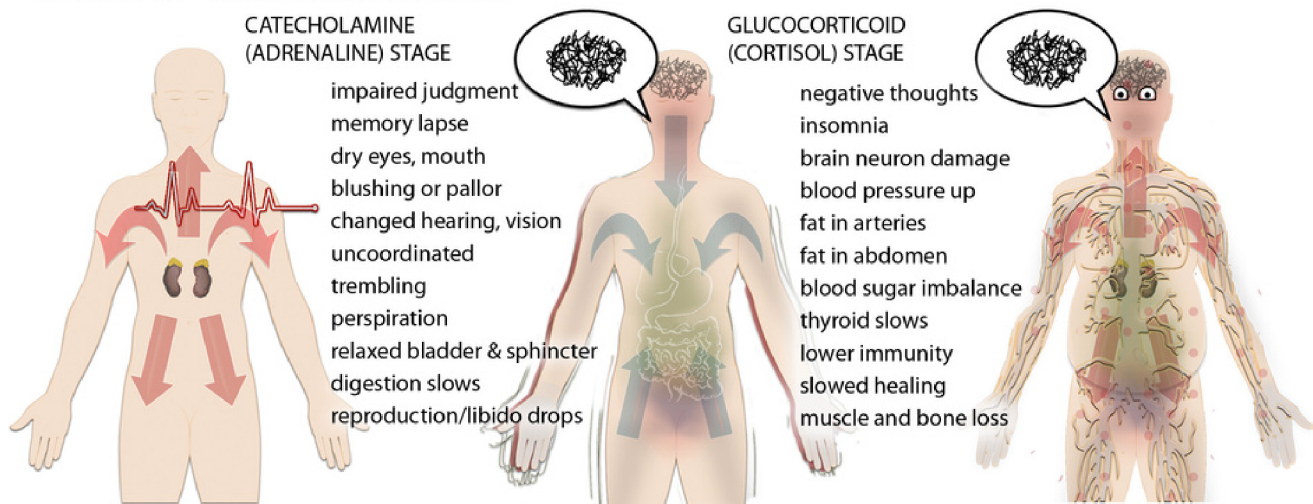
**Unfortunately, the brain is also prone to triggering the stress response in social situations that pose little or no real danger to us.** Stage fright. Irritations during a difficult day. An embarrassing mistake. An unpleasant memory.



# SESSION ONE

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STRESS RESPONSE

### EFFECTS OF THE STRESS RESPONSE



Here is what happens when you trigger the stress response:

1. You become alert and attentive to the environment.
2. Your heart rate increases.
3. The center of your adrenal glands, the medulla, releases a flood of catecholamine hormones, the chief one being adrenaline, into the blood stream. These hormones cause many effects.
  - Fat and glucose releases from your brain cells and extremities.
  - Your ability to think logically and your memory are compromised.
  - You are prepared for violent action: fight or flight.
  - Your heart rate and breathing rate accelerate.
  - Your face pales or flushes or alternates between both.
  - Your digestive system slows down or stops.
  - Your reproductive system and libido slow down or stop.
  - Your bladder muscles and sphincter muscles relax. You may feel like you need to urinate or defecate.

- Many of your blood vessels constrict. .
  - The cells in your arms, legs and brain become dehydrated.
  - Your hands and feet may sweat or feel cold.
  - The glands that produce tears and saliva are inhibited, causing dry eyes and dry mouth.
  - Your pupils dilate, causing brightness and blurring.
  - You experience loss of hearing.
  - Your throat may feel tight.
  - Your chest may feel tight.
  - Your reflexes instantaneously accelerate. You become jumpy and awkward.
  - Your body shakes or is fidgety.
4. A second flood of hormones releases when your brain and body feel the threat is over. This flood of hormones helps your brain cells and cells in your extremities get the sugar, salt, and water balanced so that fat can be properly utilized. It also causes many side-effects that you may experience, and that cause chronic issues over time.

# SESSION ONE

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STRESS RESPONSE

### Side effects of the gluco-corticoids:

- Neurons in your brain's cortex and hippocampus become very fragile and endangered, affecting our ability to learn and remember.
- You may experience increased feelings of anxiety, which can trigger the stress response all over again.
- You may experience sleeplessness.
- Your cognitive performance is impaired.
- Your thyroid function is suppressed.
- Blood sugar imbalances occur.
- Your bone density decreases.
- Your amount of muscle tissue decreases.
- Your blood pressure rises.
- Your immune system is suppressed.
- Your inflammatory response is suppressed.
- Wounds and torn tissues like muscle fibers repair more slowly.
- Your level of abdominal fat increases, which is associated with a host of diseases and health problems.
- A fatty hump develops between the shoulder blades. This condition is a sign of Cushing's disease.
- Fat cells in general expand.
- Your levels of "bad" cholesterol (LDL) increase and your levels of "good" cholesterol (HDL) decrease.

### Some of the side effects of both of the floods of hormones are:

- Compromised immune system.
- Blood pressure spikes.
- Lack of nutrients to your cells.
- Mood swings.
- Bursts of energy followed by fatigue.
- Acidic environment which enhances cancer and bacteria growth.

When you look at all of these lists of side effects, what ones have you experienced? What ones do you want to prevent?

All chronic mental and physical disease is either directly caused by stress hormones or made worse by them. If you have a particular genetic predisposition to a particular disease, science is now showing that you have much more power over whether or not that disease will manifest for you, and preventing stress hormone release is at the top of the list for experiencing your greatest potential for well-being.

When we are under the influence of stress hormones, you might as well slap an out-of-order sign on our foreheads!



# SESSION ONE

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STRESS RESPONSE



### 1 Targets

Define your aims, goals, or what you want to change.

**The Pressure-Free Method.** There are three simple steps to this method: Targets, Triggers, Tools. I've made it simple, because you and your habits of reaction are very complex.

The only way to truly de-stress is to stop the release of stress hormones. Anything else, like most of the things you read about in articles on reducing stress, is simple a band-aid approach with a limited time in a truly stress hormone-free state. Your first step is to define your targets.

**Targets.** What are you aiming for? What goals, aspirations, dreams, or visions do you have for yourself, for those you love, for your life? What would you like to shift or change that isn't working for you? What has you feeling stuck or unworthy?

Targets tend to fall into three categories: Performance, Health, and Relationships.

Performance targets may include:

Work/school experiences

- Financial goals.
- Athletic performance.
- Cognitive performance.
- Skills and talents.
- How you perform throughout your day.

Health targets include:

- mental wellness.
- physical wellness.
- improved sleep.
- less illness and disease.
- fewer colds and flus.
- fewer allergies.
- improved digestion.
- improved fertility and libido.
- disease prevention.
- less tension.
- faster healing from injury and surgery.

Relationship targets include:

- less loneliness or isolation.
- reduced social anxiety.
- improved intimacy with partner.
- deeper connection to family.
- improved friendships.
- Better work environment with co-workers.
- smoother interactions with strangers.
- less volatile reactions with those whose opinion differs from your own.

**Once the stress hormone cycle begins, it can take up to 9 Hours for males and up to 24 Hours for females to dissipate all of these hormones out of the cells. This is simply too long to compromise our health.**

# SESSION ONE

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STRESS RESPONSE



## 2 Recognize your triggers

**Triggers.** Step 2 of the Pressure-Free Method is to identify what causes you to trigger the stress response. It is usually because you are sensing or feeling something.

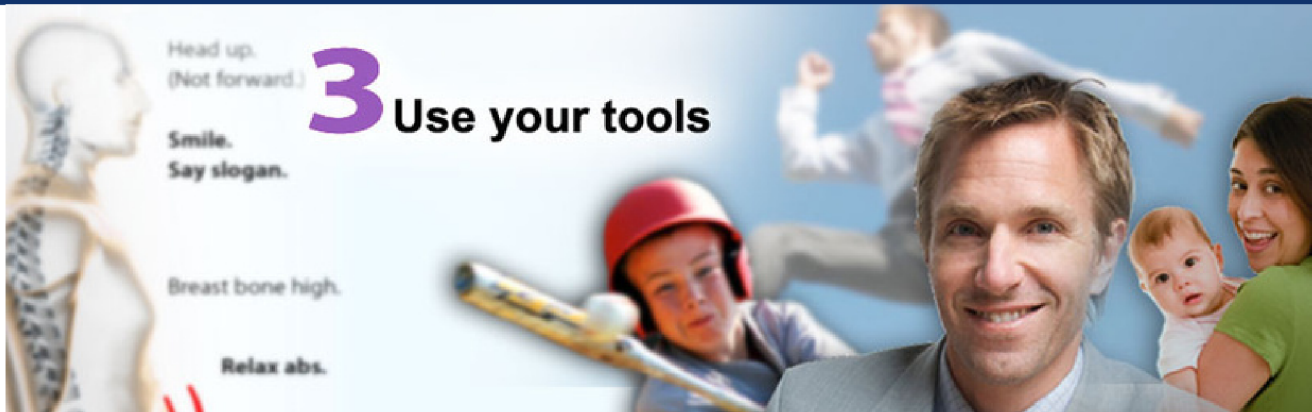
What causes you to feel annoyed or angry? Anxious or afraid? Ashamed or abused? Argumentative? Here are some possible triggers that you may want to become more aware of:

- A medical appointment.
- Receiving a diagnosis.
- Receiving health test results.
- Needing a stress test done.
- Someone near you is ill.
- A chronic pain you have.
- An injury.
- Watching the news about health.
- Health advertisements.
- Needing to take medicine.
- Knowing the side effects of medicines.
- Speaking or performing in front of others.
- Someone crying or upset.
- Noises.
- Sounds.
- Smells.
- Tastes.
- Touch or how things feel.
- Change in environment.
- Seeing someone else get hurt.
- Making a mistake.
- Under-performing.
- The weather. Too hot. Too cold.
- Driving in traffic.
- Traveling.
- Feeling like a failure.
- Get yelled at.
- Feeling mis-understood.
- Not meeting expectations.
- An upcoming event.
- Memory of a time you failed.
- Being late.
- Not sleeping well.
- Taking any sort of test.
- Not being included.
- Comparing yourself to others.
- Feeling strange about food.
- Food allergies.
- Food compulsions.
- Being overweight.



# SESSION ONE

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STRESS RESPONSE



**Tools.** The third step is to interrupt the stress response before the first flood of hormones can release.

From a resting heart rate, it takes about ten seconds for your brain, heart, and adrenal glands to make the connection that you need to release stress hormones to mobilize fat and glucose and fight or run away.

What can you do in that 10-second interval to prevent the release of the hormones? In this course, I'll be showing you dozens of ways you can interrupt the stress response. I refer to these ways as tools. You can imagine strapping on a tool belt, like the one below, and loading up your tools to protect you from stress, anger, anxiety, and overwhelm each day. Some of my clients sleep with their imaginary belt on, too!



The tools that I will share with you fall into three categories: Body tools, Mind tools, and life-design tools.

You can use each tool on its own, or combine tools into systems. The tool I will share at the end of this session to help you get started is a combination tool.

To be able to use your tools in time, you must notice the early onset of these emotions.

Here are some signs:

- Tension in your shoulders, jaw, forehead, or any other area.
- Sinking feeling in your stomach.
- Twitching in any body part.
- Racing heart rate.
- Change in your tone of voice, posture, or facial expression.
- Biting your fingernails, pens, pencils.
- Jiggling your leg.
- Furrowing your brow.
- Negative thoughts.
- Complaining
- Blaming

# SESSION ONE

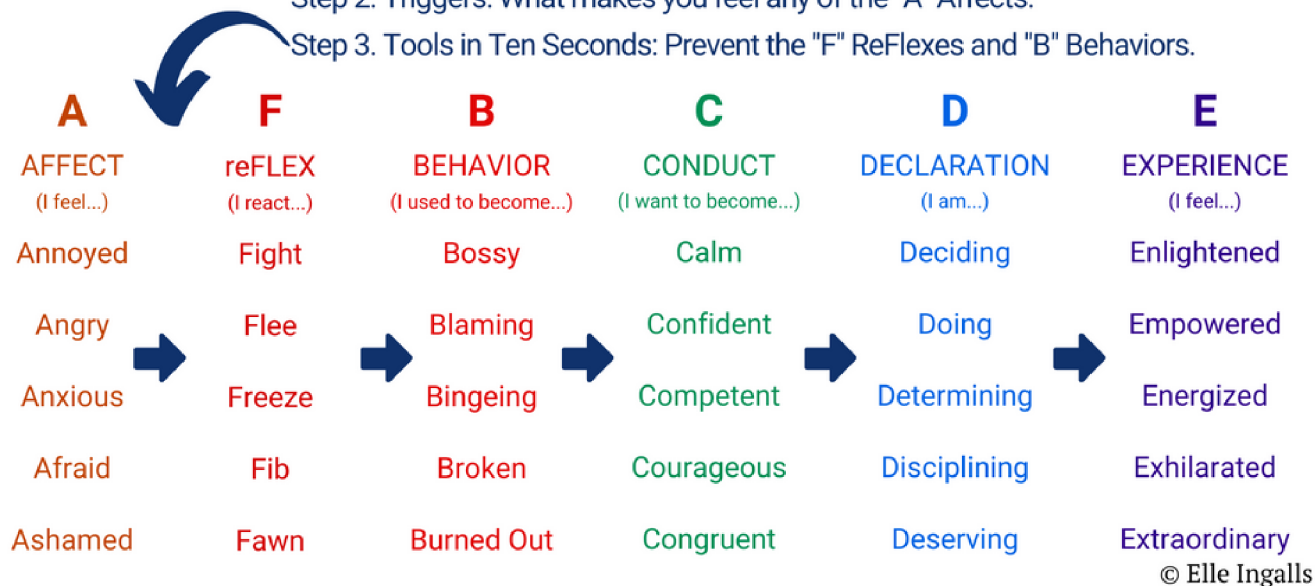
## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STRESS RESPONSE

### The Pressure-Free Method

Step 1. Targets: Define your goals, dreams, visions.

Step 2. Triggers: What makes you feel any of the "A" Affects.

Step 3. Tools in Ten Seconds: Prevent the "F" ReFlexes and "B" Behaviors.



#### The ABC's

I created this framework to help you begin to identify the stress response.

**The A's** are affects, emotions that can easily prime you to trigger the stress response. Who or what makes you feel any of these emotions?

- Annoyed, frustrated.
- Angry, out-of-control.
- Anxious, worried, nervous.
- Afraid.
- Ashamed, embarrassed.
- Argumentative, justified in your anger.
- Abused in even the slightest way.
- Agitated or over-excited. Too hyped up.

Most people are unaware of many of their triggers. But they are aware of how they feel which is why I start with these emotions. As you begin to notice what makes you feel

these emotions, you will be able to start listing out your triggers.

If you're like me, you may have a lot of triggers! It's ok, have no worries. Once you start to gain traction on breaking the stress cycle with one or two triggers, it will become easier to recognize other times that you can use Pressure-Free. I encourage you to be patient with yourself, to forgive your past reactions. They do not define you.





# SESSION ONE

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STRESS RESPONSE

**The B's.** What behaviors do you exhibit when you are stressed? You might not even be aware of how you are acting. I sure wasn't! Wouldn't it be nice if you exhibited or experienced less of these:

- Bossy, Bullying, B\*\*\*\*\*, Snippy.
- Blaming, shaming, accusing.
- Bingeing food, drink, drugs, entertainment.
- Broken, unfocused, unworthy.
- Burned out, overwhelmed, exhausted.

You may not even be aware of your behavior. Enlisting the help of someone close to you to share what they see can be really helpful.

**The C's** Your conduct. These are words my clients have used to describe how they feel once they have used the Pressure-Free Method and see for themselves the changes:

- Calm. Relaxed. Less tense.
- Confident. Strong.
- Competent. Productive. Effective. Efficient.
- Courageous. Fearless. Able to lead.
- Congruent - no more imposter syndrome.
- More in control.
- Considerate, you see and hear others.
- Compassionate, more loving.

Which one of these "C" words would you like to experience? Words can be powerful. I encourage you to write down the ones that are meaningful for you, maybe write them on sticky notes and place them around your environment. When you use Pressure-Free, you get to **choose** your response to everything.

**The D's** What do you get to declare for yourself? This is your moment. This is the first day of your Pressure-Free Life.

- Deciding, cutting off other options.
- Doing, taking committed action.
- Determining. Staying strong in your commitment and re-starting any time you need to.
- Disciplining. Pressure-Free becomes a daily discipline, a way of being naturally as you use your tools.
- Deserving. I truly believe that you deserve a beautiful life. A fulfilling life. And you hold the key. A key that is deep in your heart. A key that you get to start turning today to begin stepping into your true potential.

What do you declare for yourself? Shout it from the top of a mountain (or sand dune!)



# SESSION ONE

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STRESS RESPONSE

**The E's. Experience.** How do you want to experience your life? When you make progress stopping the stress hormones, you get to have so much more in life because you feel:

- Enlightened, your eyes are open!
- Empowered, not forceful, truly powerful.
- Energized, capable, not fatigued.
- Exhilarated. enthusiastic.
- Extraordinary. In the zone.

**The F's** The Fight-or-Flight Stress Response.

You may have any (or all!) of the following responses when you've triggered the stress response:

- Fight, get aggressive.
- Flee, want to hide, runaway.
- Freeze, feel suck, brain fog, indecisive.
- Fib, make up little lies to cover your faults.
- Fawn, over-flatter, try to belong.
- Fidget, get jumpy, uncoordinated.
- Frown, RBF, tight-lipped, holding it in.

You may react differently depending on the situation, although you may have an "F" that is your typical response.



**G's** To set you up for success, I will be sharing some unique life-design tools.

- Goal-setting. Intentions. Beliefs.
- Generous. To yourself and others.
- Gentle. Approach change gently, celebrating incremental gain.

Our society is one full of being in a hurry and busy. Pressure-Free Living is a totally different approach. It is powerful, productive presence. You get to experience this every day. It starts with being generous and gentle in spirit to yourself and others.

**The H's** How you show up matters. Here are some ways to empower you to show up powerfully and open that I learned from coach Lila Veronica.

- Heart: Open up your heart space. Have your shoulders and ribs go wide, take up lots of room. Expand your heart three-dimensionally and open to connect with others.
- Hamstrings: If you are sitting, grab your butt and pull your gluteus muscles back so that you are sitting on your hamstrings, your legs. This will immediately help your blood flow and nerve flow. It will release tension in your spine.
- Head: Bring your head up so that you are looking out at the horizon. This will ensure that the cervical curve in your neck is in a much better position.

A scared dog tucks tail between its legs. A happy dog holds its head high and wags its tail. Make sure *your* tail can wag!

# SESSION ONE

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STRESS RESPONSE

### Your Starter Tool: The Celebration Ferris Wheel.

Every time you feel one of the 4 A's start to well up in your body, imagine a small Ferris wheel right in front of you. Put your hands on one of the cars of the Ferris wheel and push it up toward the sky! The spinning is representative of the energy of your life.

In his book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins says that successful companies create positive momentum by celebrating even the smallest incremental gains. Every time you push your Ferris wheel, I want you to celebrate that you noticed a trigger, even if you still release stress hormones. It will get easier for you to interrupt the stress response with greater awareness.

This tool has been very effective for my clients, and here are some reasons why:

- It is a gross motor motion which allows your brain to create new neural pathways, making it easier to break a habit or create a new one.
- It will probably make you smile. A smile keeps neurotransmitters flowing in your brain that allow you to think well.
- It improves your posture, which gives your brain a sense of confidence and helps you get up and over the situation so that you can find solutions.

Try pushing your Celebration Ferris Wheel, and leave your arms in the air for a moment. Then bring them down slowly without moving your ribs, and you will notice that your heart is open and your head is up, two of the H's I mentioned.



Once you keep pushing your imaginary Ferris wheel and interrupt the stress response, you'll start to notice some subtle changes.

Our goal together, is that you go the entire day without triggering the stress response. Then, while you are sleeping, your body will be able to refresh, regenerate, and rejuvenate all night long, instead of using those hours to flush out stress hormones.

In the next session, you'll learn the Nine Basic Tools of the Pressure-Free Method. And each subsequent session, we will keep adding tools to your tool belt for you to experiment with.

The way stress affects you, and the triggers you experience are very unique, which is why I encourage you to "play" with these concepts. It's easy to try too hard, and that will trigger the stress response. Just play!



## Session 1.1 The ABC's of Optimal Performance

### **C's & E's Calm, Confident, Energized, Exhilarated**

What is your life like when these emotions are fueling it?

What are you achieving?

What are you experiencing?

What do you look like? feel like?

How do you affect others?

What does it mean to be your best self?

### **A's & B's Angry, Anxious, Annoyed, Ashamed, Bossy, Bullying, Breakdown**

Which emotions and behaviors do you want to gain control over?

### **D's Decisive, Determined, Dedicated, Just DO It!**

How will the decision to take this course change your life?

What steps are you taking that show you are determined to succeed?

Are you determined to follow through?

### **Pledge to Improve your life**

I \_\_\_\_\_ will devote time and energy to Optimal Performance, to watch all the training videos, to fill out all the worksheets, and to use my tools to reduce stress.



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Optimal  
**PERFORMANCE**

What if simple tools unlocked your true potential?

## **Session 1.2 What Does Stress Do To You?**

Where do you experience tension in your body?

What positive outcomes do you wish to experience by reducing stress?

What are your **top three reasons** for stopping the stress response?



## Session 1.3 Identifying Your Triggers

You will be adding new tools throughout this course.

### Trigger

*door sticks in humidity*

*internet goes down*

### Emotion

*annoyed*

*angry*

### Tool

*smile, posture*

*smile, slogan*



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## **1.4 The 10-Second Solution**

What can you do within the 10-seconds it takes for you to begin to feel a negative emotion and your heart to charge up and release the stress hormones?