

## The stress solution: How using empathy and cognitive behavioral therapy reduces anxiety and increases resilience

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The amount of stress in America and throughout the world is rapidly rising. We work too much, sleep too little, love with half a heart and wonder why we are unhappy and unhealthy. Half of Americans indicate they lie awake at night due to stress, while three quarters experience stress symptoms either physical, psychological, or both. The Harris Interactive Survey conducted in 2012 indicates high stress levels among Americans, with 53% saying they have little or no support for stress management from their health care provider. Roughly, 70% of Americans hate their jobs and feel disengaged, according to a 2013 Gallup poll, and two thirds of office visits to primary care doctors are stress-related. According to the World Health Organization, Americans die sooner and have higher rates of disease than 16 other affluent countries. Researchers at the University of Wisconsin conducted studies that indicate that stress increases the risk of dying by 43%, but only for those who believed that stress was harmful. Stress in and of itself is not the issue; it is how we react and perceive stress and its potential consequences. We know that personal and professional success does not come without sacrifice and stress, but it should not ruin our health and leave our relationships devoid of love and intimacy. Empathic Cognitive Behavioral Therapy ("CBT") will help listeners take steps to free themselves from the stress caused by the obsession to excel; it will allow participants to begin the process of finding meaning in their work, and in their relationships. We need to go beyond material reward to being able to establish genuine, healthy accomplishments throughout all aspects of life. Many people throughout the world are discovering that what they thought would bring them happiness has encapsulated them in an emotional, stress-filled prison, but there is still a path forward. The new combination of the power of empathy, brain science and cognitive behavioral therapy will provide participants with a comprehensive self-help tool to lessen stress and balance. Empathy calms the emotional brain so we can perceive accurately and thoughtfully. Being able to perceive accurately is crucial to reducing stress, as old biased thinking, based on early conditioning, distorts reality and causes unnecessary tension. Knowledge regarding neurochemistry allows us to produce our own natural chemicals that create calm, focused energy to do and be the best we can be. Finally, CBT corrects distorted thinking. These three components produce a synergy that enhances our lives, reduces the stress in our lives and releases our potential. Empathy, brain science and CBT combine in one practical formula to reduce the inordinate amount of stress in our society and in our world. I have been practicing with these three elements for more than 35 years. I believe this unique formula will allow participants to lessen the stress in their marriage, family and work-life if participants are committed to doing the necessary work.

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## Overcoming stigma and reducing the impact of mental illness in the workplace

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Each year, the cost of mental illness in Canada is approximately \$50 billion, a staggering impact which includes reduced and lost productivity. A particular challenge is the stigma that still surrounds mental illness, which prevents many from ever seeking treatment. The impact of mental illness is prevalent in every single workplace, but despite this widespread prevalence, mental illness is still greatly misunderstood in today's society. The statistics speak volumes: Just 50% of Canadians would tell friends or colleagues that they have a family member with a mental illness, compared to 72% who would discuss a diagnosis of cancer and 68% who would discuss a relative having diabetes, 49% of those who believe they have suffered from symptoms of depression or anxiety have never consulted a doctor about this problem and on any given week, at least 500,000 employed Canadians are unable to work due to mental illness. While all types of illness pose significant challenges to employers, the stigma surrounding mental illness creates complications that must be overcome to minimize lost productivity.

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