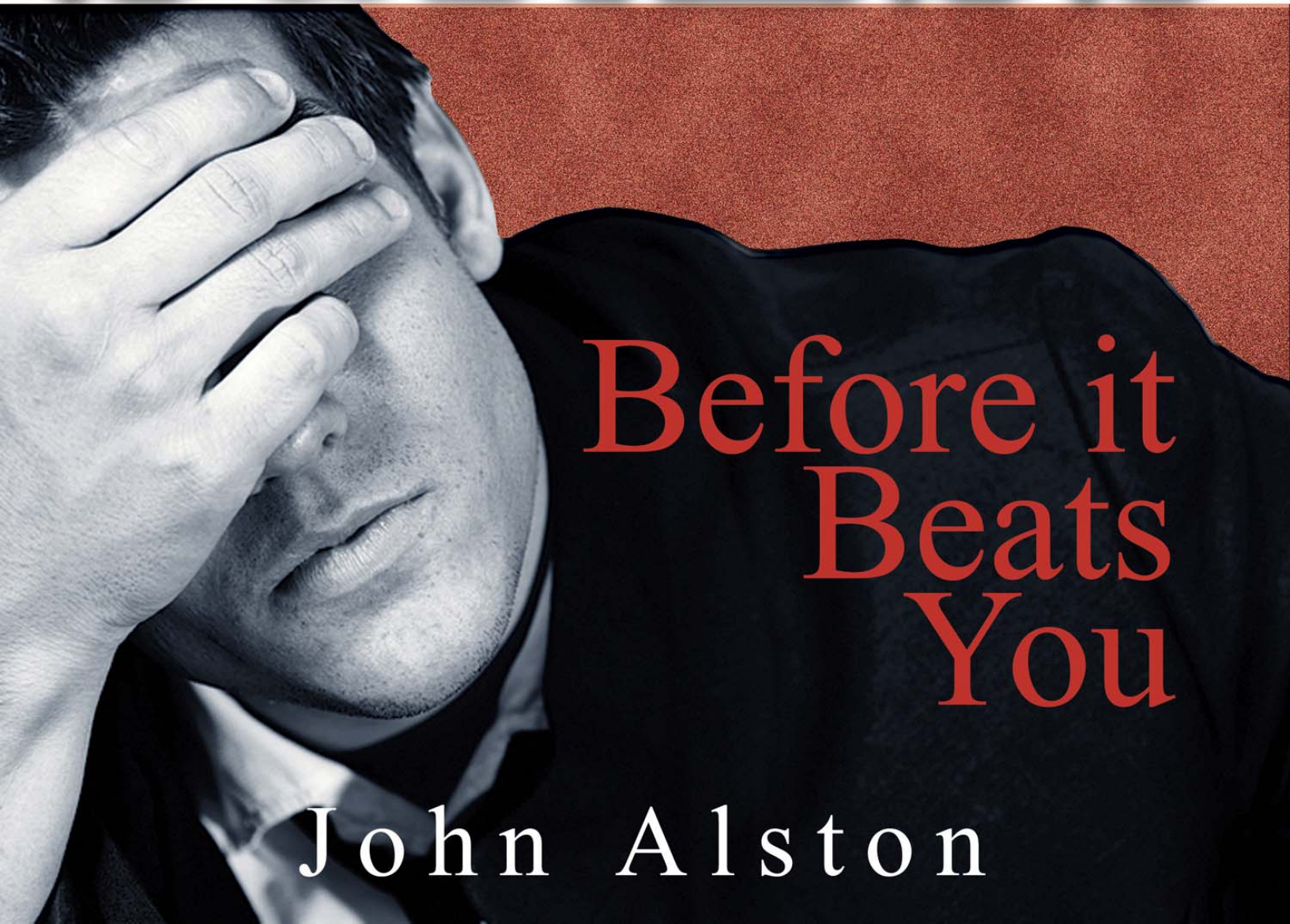


You Can Beat

# STRESS



Before it  
Beats  
You

John Alston

# You Can Beat Stress Before Stress Beats You

## by John Alston

Whistling, as he was jostled along the busy downtown sidewalk in the early morning hours, Phil made his way toward the fifteen-story corporate building that housed his office. As one of the CEOs of a large, international corporation, he had several multi-million dollar business deals pending on his desk that needed his immediate attention. But he strode down the street with a carefree attitude and in good humor.

Suddenly, an oncoming pedestrian rushed by, nearly knocking him over. The man stopped and quickly reached out his hand to steady Phil. As he did, a look of recognition crossed Phil's face. "Tom!" he exclaimed as he regained his balance. He chuckled, "In a bit of a hurry, I see. How are you?"

Tom, surprised to see Phil, apologized profusely. "Phil, I'm so sorry! I was in such a rush to get to the office, I just wasn't paying attention to where I was going. I've got so much going on; I'm just stressed out!"

*I'm so stressed out* is a phrase that most of us probably hear every day. How easy is it for you to relate to Tom in this story? How easy is it for you to relate to Phil? Many of us live in the stress zone on a continual basis, and more often than not, when it comes to dealing with stress, most of us fit the description of Tom, rather than Phil. If you'll notice, both had stressful situations to deal with, but each responded differently.

What actually is stress? Stress is a by-product of coping, striving, thriving, succeeding, and surviving throughout life's highs, lows, joys, pains, bitter moments, and sweet moments. To be quite honest, stress is just a fact of life. We all encounter a certain amount of stress in some form or another on a daily basis. The key to stress management is recognizing what intensifies stress in our own individual lives and learning how to meet it head on! Stress is intensified when we are committed to achieving something and are thwarted,



our expectations go unfulfilled, or we are resistant to a reality that is unchangeable.

Whether you are stressed because of daily responsibilities and obligations, overwhelmed with job-related tasks, recovering from a crisis, or in rehabilitation due to a life-threatening disease or disorder, this book is for you. It is designed to help you regain balance in your life, as well as access peace of mind and personal well-being, and meet stressors head on with grace and style. Your philosophy from this point on should include this affirmation: *No problem is larger than I am. I was not put here to suffer, struggle, and fail!* Amidst all of the challenges you face, take time to periodically slow down, be still, and just breathe!

In this mini-workbook, we'll take a look at what stress is, how to recognize stress signals in our life, and how to manage stress, making it work for you instead of against you.

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## I. Am I Stressed-Out?

A. *Awareness.* The first steps to dealing with any problem is to realize that there is a problem and then locate the source. Awareness is the first key to good stress management. Our body usually sends out a warning. While under intense stress, people can experience increased changes in their physiology (respiration, heart rate, and muscle tension). People can and do experience emotional and behavioral changes as well. In any case, stress involves a person's interpretation and response to a threatening event.

On the following page are some symptoms that can be a result of intense stress. Place a check mark next to any symptom that you feel you are experiencing as a result of stress.



**1. Physical**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Muscle tension
- \_\_\_\_\_ High blood pressure
- \_\_\_\_\_ Headache
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stomach upset

**2. Mental**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Poor concentration
- \_\_\_\_\_ Poor judgement
- \_\_\_\_\_ Forgetfulness

**3. Emotional**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Irrational
- \_\_\_\_\_ Depressed
- \_\_\_\_\_ Apathetic

**4. Behavioral**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Short temper
- \_\_\_\_\_ Insomnia
- \_\_\_\_\_ Overeating
- \_\_\_\_\_ Increased alcohol use
- \_\_\_\_\_ Increased use of prescription or non-prescription drugs

B. *Locating the source.* If you feel "stressed-out," realize that stress is not just a term to generalize the way we feel. There are specific events, situations, or conditions that cause us to feel stressed. Stress is not just "out there" somewhere. Stress can be localized in order to deal with it specifically.

1. Do you feel stressed-out on a regular basis? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Can you localize your stress and connect it to one or more specific situations or events? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are these situations one-time events, or are they recurring?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. List situations or events that seem to cause you the most stress.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_



C. *Perception.* Some people see stress as the event or situation that causes them to experience tension, pressure, or negative emotions. Other people see stress as the mind and/or body's response to these situations.

It's true that too much stress can seriously affect your physical and mental well-being. However, believe it or not, stress can be a positive thing. It can help us to be motivated, focused, and alert. In this stress-filled world, the challenge is to make the stress in your life work for you instead of against you.

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## II. Is There Such a Thing as Life Without Stress?

We may not want to admit it, but stress is a fact of life. Stress knocks at everybody's door. It's your *response* when you open the door that determines whether you allow it to be a positive or a negative force in your life. The ultimate goal in dealing with stress is to manage *it* and not let it manage *you*.

A. *Stress Responses.* When it comes to managing intense stress, some of us do so using healthy and productive ways; others use tranquilizers and various other harmful substances.

1. List ways in which you might respond to stressful situation.
  - a. Ignore the situation completely.
  - b. Get upset and fly off the handle.
  - c. Go for a walk to do something physical in order to regroup and relieve pressure.
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are there any positive responses on your list? \_\_\_\_\_



3. Are there more positive or negative responses on your list? \_\_\_\_\_

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B. **You manage stress; don't let it manage you.** Each of us is responsible for how we manage and respond to the stress that comes our way. Believe it or not, we do have a choice in managing it with either a positive or negative response. Just a few positive stress management strategies include:

1. *Stay fit.* Get the proper nutrition, exercise regularly, and keep weight within proper limits.
2. *Acknowledge the negatives, yet stress the positives.* Identify self-defeating behaviors and strive to minimize and/or eliminate them.
3. *Nurture yourself and allow yourself to be nurtured.* Engage in creative endeavors, personal growth activities, and hobbies.
4. *Set priorities.* Let go of organizations or activities that you don't enjoy anymore. It's your time and time is life!

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### III. Summary

In summary, stress will not always just go away, but we can learn how to manage it. Some of the steps discussed include the following:

1. If you're feeling stressed, find out specifically what is producing the stress. Generalizing it will not help you to deal with it.
2. Evaluate your current responses to each stress situation. Are your responses positive or negative?
3. Change your negative responses to positive responses.

Again, stress is a fact of life. The way in which you respond and manage stress will affect your entire well-being—physical, mental, emotional, and behavioral—either positively or negatively. Remember, you can beat stress before it beats you!

This excerpt is from an upcoming book by John Alston entitled, *You Can Beat Stress Before It Beats You*. For more information go to [www.ExtraordinaryU.com](http://www.ExtraordinaryU.com).

