

POWERSOURCE

**How People and
Organizations Can
Transform Stress and
Manage Change**

**Dr. Mark J. Tager
and Stephen Willard**



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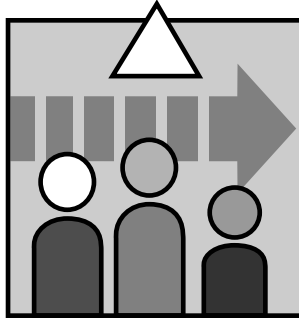
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Chapter 1

Stress, Change, and You



When the going gets tough, the tough get going.

—Sign posted in the wrestling locker-room
of W.C. Mepham High School, 1964

Some years ago an advertisement for a new, more powerful analgesic debuted with the tagline “Life Got Tougher, We Got Stronger.” Many people would agree that life has gotten tougher. It’s not uncommon to hear random comments on the street or at work to the effect of “The stress is getting to me,” or “I can’t handle all this pressure.” In the United States, in the wake of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, many lives have been shattered. An undercurrent of anxiety and tentativeness has replaced feelings of safety and security. Many wonder what might happen next. Yet, there have always been wars, and there has always been pressure. So, is life getting tougher? Is there more stress and change than ever before? We believe so. Consider the following.

Stress is Wearing Down Our Health

Americans consume more than fifteen tons of aspirin every day. Certainly some people take the analgesic for chronic conditions like arthritis or the prevention of heart disease, but how many take it for stress-related tension, backaches, and headaches? Stress can contribute to depression, impotence, heart conditions, infertility, and other serious health problems. Evidence is mounting that it is taking a toll on the immune system, reducing our natural defenses and opening the way for infectious disease and possibly cancer.

Dr. Herbert Benson, president of the Mind/Body Medical Institute at Harvard Medical School, estimates that “between 60 and 90 percent of complaints brought to doctors’ offices are due to stress.” *Industry Week*, a business magazine, estimates that stress-related illnesses in America cost more than \$200 billion a year.

Fast-Paced Lives Get Faster

We live in a 24/7 world, with more inputs than ever before. We’re overloaded with information and new technology. The average manager is bombarded with dozens of messages a day. Cell phones, pagers, faxes, and overnight delivery compound the problem. For many of us, there seems to be little time available for reflection and contemplation. At the same time information is traveling at light speed, human travel is being reduced to a snail’s pace. Just drive onto a freeway in Los Angeles, Houston, Washington, D.C., or any other major U.S. city to get a sense of it. You’ll find roadways congested with drivers who are frustrated and furious.

There’s No Place to Hide

The Internet, television, and instant communication have brought local, regional, and worldwide problems close to our doorstep. Every time we turn on the news, there are dramatic stories of famine, floods, rapes, murders, car chases, personal tragedies, political uprisings, Stock Market upheavals, and international crises. A hiccup in the Middle East sends the price of oil skyrocketing and disrupts global markets. Combine this with the hassles of daily life and age-specific stresses—finding a job, entering into a committed relationship, raising children, caring for aging parents, dealing with illness and injury—and the intensity gets magnified.

More to Do, Less to Do it With

This is particularly evident at the workplace, where we are expected to work harder, longer, and faster, and do it all without complaint. A recent study by the Families and Work Institute found that more than half of employees feel overworked. A survey conducted by Oxford Health Plans revealed that one in six U.S. employees is so overworked that he or she is unable to fully use

annual vacation time. More than a third of those surveyed said they had no down time at work and regularly had to eat their lunches while working at their desks. Nearly 20 percent said work pressures were so bad that they often worked even when they were injured or ill.

Stress and Change Affect Relationships

Stress is making people rude and difficult to work with. University of Michigan psychologist Lilia Cortina says that rudeness and bad manners are becoming common in the workplace. She found that 71 percent of workers have been insulted, demeaned, ignored, or otherwise treated discourteously by coworkers and superiors. Some workers are even becoming violent. A study from Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company in 1993 reported that 16 million workers were intimidated, 6 million were harassed, and 2 million employees were actually physically attacked on the job. “Desk rage” is the newest wrinkle in the workplace, with increasing numbers of employees having arguments and breaking down under pressure. One study found that nearly one-third of American workers admitted to yelling at coworkers due to stress. Almost one-quarter said they were driven to tears because of stress in the workplace.

Businesses Feel the Effects of Stress

Workplaces are under increasing stress to improve productivity and meet the bottom line. In many industries, managers are scrambling to recruit and retain skilled workers. As changes in the marketplace and economic upheavals cause uncertainties, downsizing and restructuring bring increased strain. As tensions mount, employers are facing rising workers’ compensation and healthcare costs, increased employee assistance program usage and harassment suits, and more and more workers who are simply burned out.

Certainly not every company in every industry is facing these challenges. Many companies are well managed and somewhat insulated from these pressures. But in industries like education, social services, healthcare, and some sectors of government, employee turnover is at an all-time high and morale is at an all-time low. The recent downturn in the high tech sector has produced a glut of

Stress HERO

In a study printed in the *American Journal of Health Promotion*, researchers analyzed the Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO) database of almost fifty thousand employees of six large companies to determine which preventable health risks were costing businesses the most. Health risks were described by their effect as a percentage of annual total expenditures. Of the eleven factors in the study, stress came out the highest, accounting for 7.9 percent of the annual expenditures of these companies.

qualified candidates for a shrinking pool of jobs. On the other hand, hospitals in many parts of the country are struggling to attract nurses. *Trendwatch*, published by the American Hospital Association, reported that in June of 2001, 126,000 nursing positions were available in American hospitals—a full 75 percent of all hospital employment vacancies. Job listings and newspapers are filled with advertisements for qualified mental health specialists that are going unfilled while current caseloads for existing staff soar. Unable to meet unrealistic demands, some employees are deliberately sabotaging

employers. They're responding to the overload by job withdrawal—being tardy for work, taking unnecessary sick days, or by simply refusing to work hard. Consider the case of a recent IRS snafu where a government subcontractor “lost” at least forty thousand tax returns. The harried employees felt they were falling behind in their work, so they simply hid or shredded the records.

The PowerSource Solution

But this book isn't about problems, it's about solutions. So what's the solution to the increasing tension in our lives and our work? We know that the increased demands aren't going to go away. We can't go back to a simpler, pre-technology era. As Harry Woodward, author of *Navigating Through Change*, has suggested, companies and individuals are going to have to learn to navigate whitewater rapids all the time. PowerSource is about developing the strength to navigate the whitewater and thrive. It's about strengthening families, communities, and workplaces by equipping people with interpersonal skills, creative vision, decision-making abilities, and tenacity. In this chapter, we'll examine the “Ten Plus One” prin-

ciples that can help create individual and organizational hardiness. But before we can proceed to the solution, let's take a closer look at what we mean when we talk about stress and change.

What is Stress?

The word “stress” was first used to describe the difficulties of life in the fourteenth century, the hardships, adversities, afflictions and predicaments that marked daily existence. For many people, little has changed in this definition. People still view stress as a negative, equating it somehow with strain and distress.

An engineer building a bridge would hold a similar viewpoint. He or she would consider stress as the sheering force or strain that could be applied to an object without it breaking. Each substance has a different tensile strength—some materials are flexible, some are rigid. In planning, the engineer would consider not just the forces applied to the object, but also what makes that object unique and how it can withstand the pressure exerted upon it.

We believe that without stress, there would be no challenge, no growth, no problems to solve, no new worlds to conquer. In short, life would be boring and stagnant. Unlike an inanimate bridge that either withstands forces or breaks, human beings have the capacity to respond to stress with regeneration and regrowth. In fact, one of the basic tenets of the PowerSource program is that *stress can make us stronger*. Consider, for example, weight training: The goal of weight training is to strain the muscle, to actually create small tears in the muscle fibers. When given proper nutrition and rest, the muscles respond to the stress by developing greater bulk and strength. In the pages ahead we will approach stress as a potentially positive force, one that you can control. But first, let's continue to look at its many definitions and better understand its origins.

.....
From our standpoint, the most practical definition of stress is a force that can either make you stronger or weaker. It challenges you to become more powerful and to use your energy over time. This force must be met with the right amount and the right kind of energy, focused in the appropriate direction.
.....

Where Does Stress Come From?

Stress comes from two places: our desires and the demands placed upon us.

Desires are *internal* forces. They include our expectations, wants, goals, hopes, and dreams. These desires drive our actions. In the most positive sense, they serve as the fuel to move us to accomplishment. We attend school out of a desire to learn more, we go to religious services to know God better, we do things for others out of a need to make a difference. When desires get excessive—when they are not built on positive values—they can lead to distress, because even when we fulfill them, we still want more. This internal pressure was probably best expressed by the ancient Indian philosopher Buddha, who built a whole religion around the principle that “desire is the root of all suffering.” No one today is saying that you have to suffer; but it is clear that, for most of us, when desires get out of hand, we experience distress trying to fulfill them.

Demands are *external* forces created by situations or people. Common demands include job responsibilities, family obligations, and life changes. Life changes vary in scope. There are big ones, like moving across the country, and small ones, like moving the living room furniture. Some changes are predictable, such as graduating from school and having to find a job, deciding on a life partner, your kids fleeing the nest at a certain age, or your retirement; others, such as an illness or death in the family, are unpredictable.

Desires and demands are often reciprocal, in other words, one causes or affects the other. For example, if you want to advance in your job (desire) you might sign up for additional classes in school. The added burden of classes (demand) stresses you even further. Other common demands are time pressures. Either way, the more changes thrust upon you, the more stress you take on.

These desires and demands are known as *stressors*. Let’s take a closer look at several of the major types.

Expectations: There are three kinds of expectations. In work and personal relationships, we first have expectations of ourselves. These expectations are what drive us to perform to our abilities; they’re also the basis for self-improvement and growth. Second, we

have expectations of others (especially significant others and children); and finally others have expectations of us. Our parents, spouses, and kids all anticipate that we will act in specific ways. Work-related expectations often take the form of job descriptions, performance reviews, peer pressure, and employer-imposed tasks.

These three types of expectations, however, are often in conflict. The field of nursing is a classic example. Health care professionals often have high personal expectations that involve compassion and quality of care. They in turn expect their institution to create an environment that allows them to achieve their goals. Finally, patients expect the caregiver to meet their needs. Yet the realities of paperwork, politics, and inadequate staffing often prevent caregivers from either fully realizing their self-expectations or meeting those of the patient.

Conflicts with our values: Values are the standards we use to judge our own actions and the actions of others. Commonly held values include fairness, trust, respect, and honesty. Sometimes the commitments we form, in acting upon our desires, clash with our values. For example, a health-oriented advertising writer may be asked to work on a cigarette account, or an environmentally concerned worker may be employed by a company that doesn't recycle.

Other times, our short-term choices don't fit with our long-term values. If you want to get married and have a family—a long-term

Compassion Fatigue

People in the helping professions—nurses, doctors, therapists, social workers, etc.—frequently suffer from what our colleague, Fern Carness, calls *compassion fatigue*. For these concerned workers, there's often little relief available.

Compassion fatigue is different from burnout in that health-care workers are not afforded the privilege of getting angry in times of stress. Bankers, for example, can say, "I've had it! I'm going home. I'll finish this tomorrow...*if* I decide to come in at all." Nurses, on the other hand, can't do that because they know someone will suffer for everything they don't do. Calling in "sick" to spend the day at the mall with your daughter could mean a patient receives sub-par care, has to wait longer to be treated, or even dies. What a lump in the throat to take with you to the mall.

value—a possible stressor is a short-term, time-consuming relationship with someone who doesn't want either one.

Commitments and obligations: These are agreements you've made with others, or yourself, that require you to behave in a certain way. Marital fidelity, promptness at work, and your drive to give your employer a full day's work for a full day's pay are all forms of commitment. When you are torn by multiple demands, you may have to sacrifice something in order to remain true to yourself and to those with whom you have made the commitment.

Time: Demands and desires require time. We can only be in one place and do one thing at a time. Often, when we have multiple demands made upon us in a short period of time, our own personal desires, and our first choices for what we'd like to do with our time, come last. There is simply no time left in the day to do what we'd like to do.

Dealing with Change and Loss

What is important to remember is that the first reaction most people have to change is loss. These reactions are particularly common when people experience work-related changes. They focus on what is being taken away from them, how they are being in some way diminished, or they regret the loss of the familiar.

We conduct a change exercise with participants in our workshop. It demonstrates people's loss-orientation. We ask two people to face one another and observe what the other person is wearing. We then ask each individual to change five things about their physical appearance and see if they can identify the changes the other person has made. Most participants have no problem with this part of the exercise. Almost all of them remove five items. They take off their watches, remove their jackets or ties, take off their shoes. We then ask them to change an additional ten things. Usually, this directive is met with groans and grunts as they realize they don't have ten more things they can take off. It's not uncommon to hear participants reply, "I can't do ten things, I'll be naked." This is because they tend to equate change with loss, with having to take something off, to give it up. When facilitated properly, workshop participants realize they can make changes by incorporating other

items into their appearance. They add items from the room, they borrow clothes from other participants, they see that there is more to change than just loss, and they have fun in the process.

Many people speak of crises in their lives. Some are truly moments of bereavement, such as the death of a loved one. Others are points at which we recognize our plans will not be realized and our expectations are disrupted. We lose a job, we lose a sale, we lose a relationship, we lose or damage an object that has some meaning to us. All of the above stressors involve changes in our lives. One of the PowerSource goals is to redefine change—not as loss—but as an event or situation that can encourage growth and have a positive outcome. Regardless of the change, it's possible to find lessons and growth opportunities.

How Stress Affects the Body

Stressors, if we perceive them as a threat, set off what's called the stress response. If we look at and label desires and demands as problems, our body interprets them as crises and responds in a very predictable way. The noted physiologist, Hans Selye, often called "the father of stress management," described how the body mobilizes its neurochemical defenses, sending a cascade of chemicals that help the body react to the stress. He called this the *general adaptive syndrome*, or GAS. The autonomic nervous system, with messages originating in the hypothalamus and pituitary gland, causes an outpouring of cortisol from the adrenal glands to mobilize the body against an attack and to

Life After Loss?

One of the questions we have asked spiritual teachers, counselors, and friends is whether one can ever get back to baseline, or thrive again, following a major loss, such as the death of a child. In describing this experience, one friend who lost a child several years ago related it to falling into a deep dark well. She struggled hard to get back up to ground.

Is it possible to thrive after such a loss? We don't have the answer. Clearly, life will never be the same. Rekindling joy and meaning will be terrifically difficult. In our experience, those who seem to thrive again, years after an event like this, have usually turned to and embraced a higher power or cause. They have dedicated their life to finding meaning through the best that religion has to offer, or to a task that has great importance to them, such as spearheading a chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving in memory of a child killed in a drunk driving accident.

repair the body after injury. The reason that chronic stress can make us sick, according to Selye, is that the body reacts to stress with the physiological fight or flight response and then tries to return to its normal state. With continued or chronic exposure to stress, the body loses its ability to adapt. The end result is a state of physiological exhaustion.

The harmful effects of stress are increasingly being linked to negative emotional states. H. S. Friedman and his colleagues at Harvard University were some of the first researchers to document that people who experience negative emotional states such as depression, anxiety, and hostility in response to stress are more likely to develop heart disease, asthma, headache, gastric ulcers, arthritis, and a variety of other ailments.

Ongoing research is demonstrating that our psychological response to stress impacts the immune system and our ability to resist disease. A number of researchers in the early 1990s, with Robert Ader and Nicholas Cohen at the forefront, founded a new field called psychoneuroimmunology, the study of stress and immune response. How do our mental processes impact our immunity? The brain sends chemical messages to the autonomic nervous system and the endocrine system, which, in turn, link to organs involved in the immune response. It's a two-way system, with the brain also receiving feedback from the endocrine and immune systems. When we're confronted with stress, receptors located on white blood cells send out chemical messages that alert the brain to the threat. If these immune response processes are disrupted by chronic stress or negative emotional states such as depression, illness or even death can result.

The Search for the Key: How to Handle Stress and Change

Steve and I have taught stress and change management seminars for a combined fifty years. We've studied the work of others in the field. We've observed people in clinical settings. All of this inquiry has led us to wonder why some people handle stress and change so much better than others. Why do some people seem relatively unaffected by daily problems? Why do they seem to bounce

back and even thrive on adversity? What are the tools that the most resilient people use to navigate change? What are some of the traits that make people more successful, more powerful in leading their lives? By studying people who thrived with stress, we were able to identify ten traits they all shared. For many years, we taught the ten universal principles of stress management. No matter who you are—regardless of your age, gender, or health-status—these tools can help you deal more effectively with pressure. An explanation of these principles follows.

To these principles, we've added the eleventh, a principle that recognizes that while there are universal tools that most everyone can use to control stress, there are also skills that are tailored to your specific energy profile. This correlates to how you, and other people like you, prefer to gather information about the world and interpret this information. Your profile, in large measure, determines why some stressors bother you more than others. It also points to the specific actions you can take to become more powerful, to gain additional strength to handle life's challenges. This is the PowerSource Profile, which we'll discuss at the end of this chapter.

"Ten Plus One" Principles

1. Integrate and learn from changes life throws at you.
2. Catch yourself sooner.
3. Control the workings of your nervous system.
4. Determine what's important and what you can control.
5. Regularly examine your attitude and internal dialogue.
6. Move toward optimism and hope and away from anger and cynicism.
7. Find meaning in life.
8. Develop stronger connections with others.
9. Follow through on commitments.
10. Sweat the small stuff.
- +1. Identify and use your PowerSource energies.

1. Integrate and Learn from Changes Life Throws at You

In the mid-sixties, Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe of the

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University of Washington School of Medicine attempted to quantify the effect of life changes, both good and bad, on our health. They developed the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRE), which assigned impact points to forty-three life events. Big events such as the “death of a spouse” received 100 points, divorce, 73, marital separation, 65. Smaller events such as “trouble with boss” were assigned 23 points, “change to a different line of work” 36 points. Positive events earned points as well, with scores for marriage, addition of a new family member, and outstanding personal achievement each rating in the mid-range. Christmas was rated a 12. Early studies showed a correlation between a high score on the SRE and a propensity to get sick.

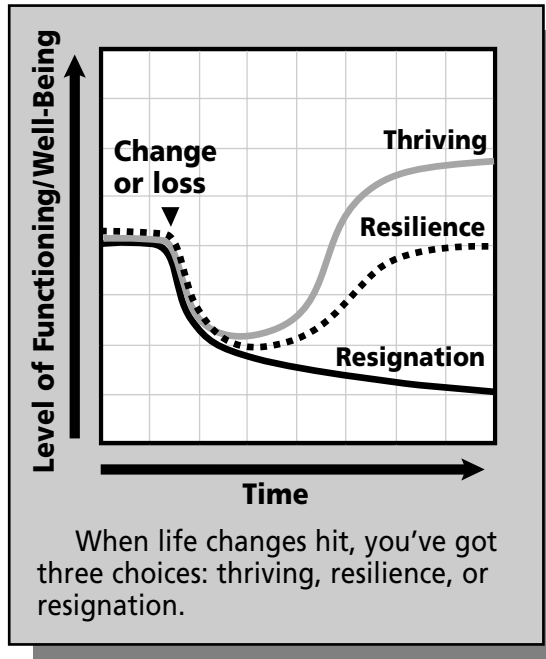
In one study, 2,500 naval personnel at sea were given the SRE. The 30 percent with the highest scores developed almost 90 percent more illness during the first month of the cruise than those scoring in the lower 30 percent. Holmes and Rahe concluded that if you accumulated over 300 points on the assessment in a year, you were in the “at-risk” group for developing stress-related illness. While the SRE acknowledged that events can take their toll on people, in no way was it comprehensive enough to cover all the stressors (what about Thanksgiving?). Nor did it take into account the degree of importance that a person assigned to an event. Finally, it failed to look at what Steve and I found most interesting: those people who scored over 300 points and who did not become ill from change. What was unique about them?

One of the traits that we have observed in these more hardy people is the willingness to grow through change. Much has been made by business authors of the necessity to create the learning organization. In a learning organization, a company not only builds knowledge, it seeks to profit by learning from its past mistakes. This is true on a personal level as well. We can learn from the curves that life throws our way. In fact, the act of learning from change makes us less likely to be upset by it the next time around. As we hone our learning skills and become more capable of handling stressors, we notice that things we have no control over begin to have less control over us.

Consider our friend Megan, a high school teacher. After earning her teaching certificate, Megan was enthusiastic and optimistic about her career choice to help students in an inner city school. By the end of her first year, however, two of her favorite students dropped out, one was expelled for gang activity, and one was pregnant. Perhaps this would've been enough to convince some people to find a new line of work. Instead, Megan chose to learn an important lesson—the choices of her students did not determine her ability as a teacher—and she continues to teach fifteen years later, unfazed by increasing violence, teen pregnancy, illiteracy, drugs, and gangs in schools.

Today, you are functioning at a certain level of well-being. This well-being is a reflection of your physical, emotional, and spiritual health, and how you function in the world. Your baseline is the starting point. Then a change hits—something out of the blue. You receive a call from your significant other who wants to break up with you; your company has cut 30 percent of its staff; your child has decided to marry someone you dislike. It is normal and natural for your level of wellness/functioning to decline. What happens next is up to you. In the graph to the right, you can see the three courses most people follow.

The first, shown by the bold line, describes *resignation*—a mixture of anxiety, hopelessness, and despondency. Some people hold onto this loss and never get beyond it. They feel they “could’ve been a contender,” but blame a change for holding them back. In the second scenario, the dotted line, you bounce back to where you were over a period of time. This is known as *resilience*. The third possibility, expressed by the grey line, is the most

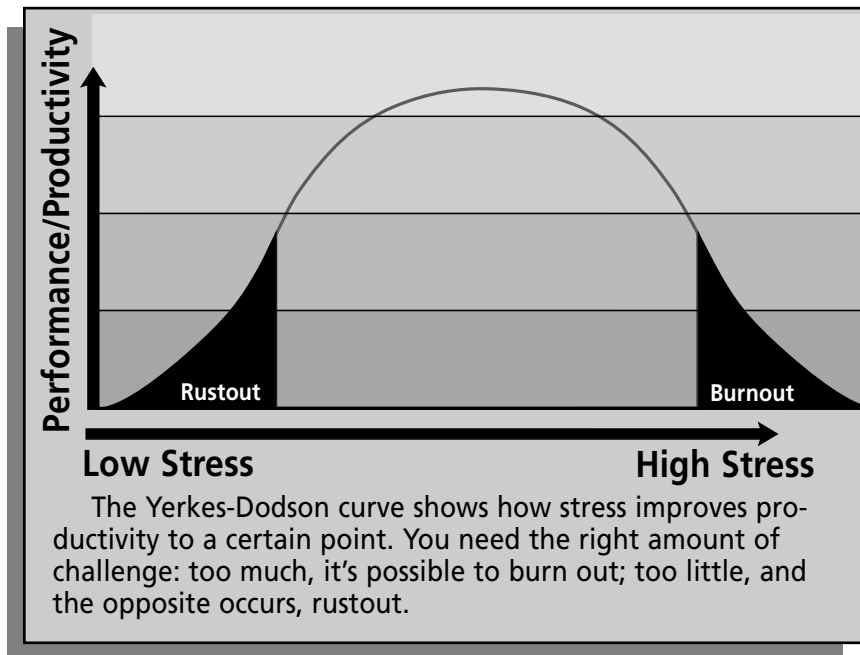


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intriguing—*thriving*. In this example, you not only bounce back, but you exceed your baseline. You have incorporated lessons from the change and moved to higher levels of functioning. The most healthy people we observed continually looked for ways to learn from life's challenges and used this information to get stronger.

2. Catch Yourself Sooner

How much pressure can people take? In the early 1900s, doctors Robert M. Yerkes and John D. Dodson, two researchers from Harvard, described a phenomenon that many of us have come to know instinctively: Performance and efficiency are directly related to stress. Their experiments led to the creation of a classic bell-shaped curve, called the Yerkes-Dodson law, which shows how performance increases up to a certain point with increasing stress; beyond that maximum point, more stress only harms the body. Fortunately, our body provides us with signals to let us know when we are approaching high levels of distress. These signals fall into three categories: physical signs and symptoms, thoughts and feelings, and behaviors. The chart on the next page illustrates some common stress-related reactions. What's important in looking at



COMMON STRESS-RELATED REACTIONS		
Physical Signs and Symptoms	Thoughts and Feelings	Behaviors
Fatigue Sleep problems Frequent illness Tight neck and shoulders Cold or sweaty hands Headaches High blood pressure Upset stomach Blushing Eyestrain Excessive sweating Constipation/Diarrhea Nervous tics Rashes Teeth grinding	Lack of focus Nervousness Irritability Impatience Anger Depression Helplessness Hostility Loss of confidence Frustration Inadequacy Annoyance Anxiety	Inability to concentrate Overeating Forgetfulness Procrastination Swearing Reckless driving Oversleeping Drinking and drug use Negativism Increase in smoking Belittling others

this list is to realize that these warning signs and symptoms don't occur in a vacuum. They are responses to the stressors in our lives.

One of the key skills to becoming more stress resilient is to heighten your awareness. You want to catch your high levels of stress sooner by making the connection between desires and demands and the way you respond. The better you get at making the connection between cause and effect, the quicker you can act to prevent the stressor from taking a toll on your health.

Try the following exercise. Think back to a time in the last few weeks when you were experiencing a great deal of stress. Identify the desire or the demand. How did you respond? In other words, if a good friend were to observe you or we could hook you up to a machine that would monitor your body functions, what would we record? Did you clench your teeth through a series of unproductive business meetings, or sleep poorly thinking about the upcoming sale of your home? Can you link the stressors with your response? Is this one of your recurrent patterns? You might try keeping a log or journal to record events and your reactions to them. It's easier to see cause and effect when it's written down.

3. Control the Workings of Your Nervous System

While you can't control all of life's events, you can almost always control your reaction to them. After all, no one else gives you a headache or a stomach ulcer; you do it. And acknowledging this control also gives you the power to change. You have more control over your nervous system than you think. Your autonomic nervous system controls the regular workings of your bodily functions such as heartbeat, temperature regulation, and the motility of your intestinal tract. It has two parts: the sympathetic system, which is responsible for arousal, increasing heart rate, blood pressure, and muscle tension; and the parasympathetic system, which exerts the exact opposite effect. These nervous impulses calm the body, slow down the heart rate, divert blood to the extremities, and lower muscle tension.

The best ways to enhance the parasympathetic system involve breathing, relaxation, and meditation techniques. You'll find a number of these described in chapter 5. We call them grounding skills because they help to defuse tension and create a safety net, in the same way that a high-voltage electrical appliance needs to be grounded so it doesn't burn out. Breathing and relaxation techniques are first aid for stress and tension. In the late sixties and early seventies, transcendental meditation became a popular technique. The devotees of this system were encouraged to meditate twenty minutes twice a day. It is not uncommon to meet baby boomers who have been conducting this practice religiously for the past thirty years. Those whom we have met have a remarkable ability to remain calm in the face of chaos. Most recently, thanks to the work of doctors Keith Wallace and Herbert Benson, relaxation has gone mainstream. They documented that people can achieve a state of profound rest by focusing their concentration and letting go of distracting thoughts. Relaxation is being included as a valid integrative medicine tool for treating a wide variety of conditions such as preparing for surgery, managing chronic illness, or reducing musculoskeletal tension.

4. Determine What’s Important and What You Can Control

Have you ever found yourself spending ten dollars worth of your energy worrying about a one-dollar problem? How about one dollar of energy on a ten-dollar problem? All of us can identify times when we’ve done this. The real goal is to spend energy wisely. And you’ll be most effective when you focus on what’s important and learn to let go of the little hassles in life.

If you take a moment to think about your personal stressors, you’ll recognize that only you can assess their importance and your level of involvement with, and attachment to, them. What is crucially important to one person may be relatively insignificant to another. Only you can decide if a stressor is out of your control, or if it can be changed.

These two factors, control and importance, combine to form a grid with four quadrants, as shown below.

In the upper left quadrant are issues that are both important and controllable. These are the “A” priority items on your to do list. You’ll get the most benefit, and avoid the greatest amount of distress, if you attend to these items. In the lower left quadrant (B) are the items that are important but you can’t control. An example might be the growing tension in the Middle East. Because the issue is important, it requires thought. You want to understand the issues and the potential impact on your life. But the event is beyond your scope of control. At some point, if you continue to focus on it, not only will you waste energy that could have been better spent otherwise, you’ll also reinforce feelings of powerlessness. In the upper right quadrant are the issues that aren’t important but you can control. These are the “C”

	Important	Not Important
Can Control	A	C
Can't Control	B	D

STRESS, CHANGE, AND YOU

items in a to do list. You don't want to spend a great deal of energy attending to them, but you need to deal with them so they don't pile up. Finally, there are the issues in the lower right quadrant (D), which are neither important nor controllable. These are a total waste of your time and attention. Once you've identified this type of issue, immediately file it in your mental wastebasket.

Let's examine a few situations more closely and see how these principles apply. In our workshops, we ask people to rate the level of control and level of importance on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.

	Important	Not Important
Can Control	Forgot Mother's Day Take Action: Call, Send Flowers, etc.	C
Can't Control	B	D

Situation One

You've just realized that because you were wrapped up in a project that required twenty-hour days, you totally forgot about Mother's Day. You're actually very close to your parents, care deeply for them, and realize how much you have probably upset and hurt your mother.

You now take time to analyze the situation and label it a 10 in terms of importance. Clearly, it is a situation within

your control in terms of acting to make everything right. You could begin by calling another family member to find out how upset mom was, and then take the appropriate steps in terms of calling, sending flowers, a telegram, a gift, etc. The real distress comes when and if you decide not to act, to just accept the situation and assume everything will smooth over in a few weeks.

Situation Two

You were at a cocktail party with your boss and his wife, who were showing off their prize Pekingese. You made the hasty, off-the-cuff remark, "I've never seen a dog as smart as my cat." You return from the party but can't get the remark out of your head. You men-

tally berate yourself for the next few hours, wondering how you could have been so stupid. Finally you fall asleep, only to awaken at four in the morning, again reliving the situation and regretting what you said. The next day you see your boss, who tells you how utterly charming his wife found you, how witty and forthright, and how they'd love to have you over again for dinner.

	Important	Not Important
Can Control	A	C
Can't Control	B	Your Pekingese Remark <hr/> Let Go. Don't Waste Energy

We have yet to find anyone who hasn't spent a sleepless night needlessly worrying about something that wasn't important (certainly in the big scheme of things), and that they couldn't do anything about. In this example, a little perspective allows you to see the futility of spending energy this way. Hopefully, you'll give less attention next time around to such a minor situation.

In the table above, the B stressors are those events that are important, yet uncontrollable, like being caught in a traffic jam when you're trying to get to an important meeting, having the post office lose an original document critical to the success of a big project, or dealing with a terminally ill relative. In these situations, there is much more on the line, yet there is nothing to do but to "let go" of the stressor. Although this course of action seems simple, learning to let go is one of the most difficult of the stress management skills.

To begin with, letting go doesn't mean you don't care. You care, but you have learned detached concern. In this way, the stressor doesn't get to you. Often this ability is only learned with experience, but there are techniques some people use that are helpful. Prayer, meditation, philosophical sayings, and deep-breathing can help to lessen the impact. In some professions, most notably health-care, this skill is a virtual must.

Stress? What Stress?

Umpiring a baseball game certainly looks like a stressful task. Hunched over the plate, pitch after pitch, an umpire must track the trajectory and location of an object traveling up to one hundred miles an hour to determine if it is a ball or a strike.

Three umpires once discussed their philosophy of the job as follows:

The first, "It's easy! If it's out of the strike zone, I call it a ball. If it's over the plate, I call it a strike."

The second, "I don't think it's hard. I just call them the way I see them."

The third, "They ain't nothin' till I call 'em."

And so it is with the stressors in life. They "ain't nothin'" until we call them, label them, and give them potential power to affect us.

5. Regularly Examine Your Attitude and Internal Dialogue

Our minds contain a filter. This filter is comprised of our attitude and a combination of perceptions, beliefs, and life experiences that color what we observe. Often, a person's self-dialogue says a lot about the quality and nature of their filter. If we had a tape recorder and could hook it up to your mind to record your inner dialogue, what would it reveal about you? Is there an inner critic judging your every move, or can you learn from mistakes? Do you get down on yourself, or affirm yourself daily? Are you more likely to blame others or to take responsibility? Do you see problems and crises or challenges and opportunities?

Most of us know an older person whose body may have deteriorated since their youth, but whose

inner beauty and tranquility have grown over the years. When you ask these people what the key is to happiness, they usually will tell you it's all in their attitude. They have a positive mental filter, perhaps using sayings such as "This too shall pass," or "Lord help me accept the things I can't change." Many will talk about how they are willing to "reframe" situations by looking at them differently and perhaps finding something positive.

One of the most helpful acceptance techniques is known as *reframing*. Reframing is a way to look at a problem in another light by creating a new viewpoint that defuses the situation. You can't reframe everything, but you can help yourself with acceptance. To see how powerful a tool this is, consider the following scenario:

It's a cold, rainy night and you have driven around in circles in the parking lot for ten minutes looking for a parking space. Finally, you notice someone backing out, so you wait for the space. Just as you are about to pull in, a pickup truck zips into your parking space. The driver hurries out of the car and runs toward the store. You get angry and vow to give him a piece of your mind if you see him inside.

Now let's reframe the situation. Instead of assuming the guy is rude and selfish, imagine his motives. What if he has a hungry baby at home in need of formula? Perhaps his wife is diabetic and needs her insulin. Maybe he's almost late for work and will be fired if he's late again. We all have pressing events in our lives that cause us to occasionally step on the toes of others. So, to avoid reacting with anxiety or anger, it is important to remember that people's actions, when considered in context, might not be as bad as they seem. Reframing allows us to imagine the context and therefore let go of the stress.

6. Move Toward Optimism and Hope and Away from Anger and Cynicism

In 1974, two San Francisco cardiologists, Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman, put forth a powerful theory in their book *Type A Behavior and Your Heart*. They classified people into two types: Type A and Type B. The Type A personality, they said, was more prone to coronary artery disease as the result of three psychological characteristics: always being in a hurry, being easily provoked to hostility and anger, and having high levels of competitiveness and ambition. The more relaxed Type B, they believed, was able to handle stress more easily—to roll with the punches so to speak—and thus was less vulnerable to heart disease. Their theory was supported by a research study known as the Western Collaborative Group Study. It followed three thousand men for eight and one-half years. The rate of heart disease was twice as great for Type A men as for Type B men, even when other factors such as smoking, cholesterol, and high blood pressure were taken into account.

While the Type A–Type B personality theory provided insight into how some personality components might affect the rate of heart disease, subsequent follow-up studies conducted by different

researchers cast doubt on the strength of the association. Further investigation by Dr. Redford Williams at Duke University Medical Center and other researchers has shown that the hostility component of Type A seems to be the most accurate predictor of heart disease—specifically, three harmful emotional traits: cynicism, anger, and aggression. The “hurry sickness” component of Type A was a much less important factor.

If anger, cynicism, and aggression are stones on the path to early death, is there a path that can promote health and longevity? A growing body of scientific literature is confirming what Norman Vincent Peale wrote about a half-century ago and described in his book, *The Power of Positive Thinking*. Optimists not only lead more enjoyable lives than pessimists, they live longer as well.

A study at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, confirmed what Peale and others took as common sense. The researchers first interviewed 839 people living in Olmstead County, Minnesota in the 1960s. At this time, they examined their attitudes and classified the participants as basically optimistic or pessimistic. Thirty years later, the researchers reviewed the history of the 839 people. Those who had been labeled optimists three decades earlier lived almost twenty years longer. The researchers determined that people’s attitudes were linked to their ability to care for themselves, in part because they were less fatalistic about their well-being.

7. Find Meaning in Life

Values are those principles and ideals that we hold dear. They’re the rules, if you will, that should guide our lives. They tell us what’s important, what actions and attitudes are right, and those that are wrong for us. When your actions are in sync with your goals and your values, your life has meaning, and this provides strength to overcome adversity.

Viktor Frankl, a noted psychiatrist, was imprisoned in a Nazi prison camp in Germany during World War II. Through his studies, Frankl attempted to understand why some people in the camps gave up and died while others lived. His conclusion was that the survivors lived because they had:

- A sense of lifework or purpose that they were living to fulfill.

- A powerful love of family and belief that they would see their spouses and children at some time in the future.
- A belief in the rightness of the principles of their nation, a sense of patriotism, and a belief in the importance of freedom.
- A belief in God. By being in touch with the spiritual, they believed they would survive.

Frankl called this *man's search for meaning*. These people understood and believed in their values—ideals that gave their actions purpose and direction—and, in this case, helped them survive the stress of a terrible ordeal.

8. Develop Stronger Connections with Others

Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone*, calls the collective value of our social ties *social capital*. The term includes social connections based on trust, reciprocity, information exchange, and cooperation. Unfortunately, Putnam's evidence indicates that our social capital is on the decline.

There has been a great deal of scientific research on how social support helps to buffer isolation and how it contributes to mental health and longevity. Dr. George Kaplan and his colleagues have been following the lives of several thousand healthy people in Alameda County, California. He has shown that those with the highest number of social connections—deep ties to friends, family members, community and religious groups—have lower death rates than those with the fewest ties.

Dr. Sheldon Cohen, professor of psychology at Carnegie Mellon University, has extended these findings. According to Cohen, not only do people with more social ties live longer, it appears that they are less likely to develop a cold when exposed to rhinovirus, one of the most common respiratory viruses. Cohen exposed 276 healthy volunteers, ages eighteen to fifty-five to nasal drops containing viruses. Those with one to three types of social relationships were four times

Waning Social Capital in the Last Twenty-Five Years

Attending club meetings: down 58 percent

Family dinners: down 33 percent

Having friends over: down 45 percent

more likely to develop a cold than those with six or more social ties. So, perhaps one of the best investments you can make in your health is to pick up the phone and make a date with a friend, join a club or a team, meet your neighbors, or get involved in a community event. Good friends make good medicine.

9. Follow Through on Commitments

One of the major contributions to understanding the concept of stress resilience has emerged from the work of University of Chicago psychologist Salvatore Maddi and colleague Suzanne Kobasa. Maddi and Kobasa studied the lives of business executives and lawyers—people who dealt with large amounts of stress on a daily basis—and were able to identify three traits, all beginning with the letter “C,” that comprised the hardy executive. The three traits were control, challenge, and commitment. Two of these traits, control and challenge, we’ve discussed above. Commitment, according to Kobasa and Maddi, involves a willingness to be actively involved and engaged in life. The three factors, collectively, help create the energy for accomplishment. Because these individuals see themselves as able to control major aspects of their lives, and view problems as challenges that stimulate personal growth, they can then make meaningful commitments in life.

One of the things that we often ask workshop participants to do is to create a personal PowerSource plan to develop their weak energies. We ask participants to establish a three-week goal, and then encourage them to rate their commitment to that goal on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being high). If they cannot give themselves a 9 or 10, we encourage them to rewrite their goal so they are totally confident they can achieve it. There is power in making a commitment and honoring it.

10. Sweat the Small Stuff

Little stuff can be important. The noted psychologist, Richard Lazarus, has shown that it is not so much the big events that cause people distress, but the accumulated stress of little hassles. More recently, Thomas Leonard of Coach University coined the word *tolerations* to represent the list of little things we have to put up with each day that sap our energy. Examples of tolerations are the

broken fax machine, the thank you letter that still isn't written, the dog who needs a bath, that constantly blinking 12:00 on the VCR. Each little toleration is not a big deal, but accumulating twenty-five to fifty becomes an extra weight that you must carry. According to Leonard, when the proverbial straw breaks the camel's back, often it is because your list of tolerations has gotten too long. While you don't have to sweat these things, you do need to attend to them, if for no other reason than to remove clutter and any twinges of guilt from your mind.

Richard Carlson is author of a series of excellent books that advise *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff* in everything from business to family to love. While we appreciate the simplicity of the concept, the downside of categorizing events as "small stuff" is that one can too easily miss the small, but important, opportunities that give meaning and value to life. In the wake of the World Trade Center attacks, normally standoffish New Yorkers hugged each other, cried in public, and even smiled at strangers. In the days and weeks that followed, all of us in the United States became more aware of the little but important things in life. We took an opportunity to hug our loved ones, to tell someone we cared about them. Perhaps we were a little more cognizant of the homeless person with the sign asking for help, standing by the freeway onramp. We may have made eye contact or given some spare change. In the wake of the tragedy, I went to temple for consolation. Our rabbi, David Frank, reminded us, "Greatness is found in individual moments lived well." He admonished us not to miss those moments of kindness, helpfulness, and appreciation. What's the small stuff? Letting someone cut ahead in traffic, holding a door open for the person behind you, reaching out and connecting to a neighbor. Live these individual moments well. They will enrich your life and help you put life's challenges in perspective.

10+1. Identify and Use Your PowerSource Energies

The researchers and authors cited above have helped quantify and distinguish among the different types of stressors. They've initiated scientific inquiry into stress resistance, beginning with a look at the important role of attitude and social factors. And they have

started to tease out some of the answers to the key issue of this book: *what accounts for our unique differences and our individual responses to stress?* Why is it that one person placed under a certain type of stress thrives while another falls over dead of a heart attack? Why does one child, for instance, see an act of cruelty and become overwhelmed with sadness while another child barely recognizes the incident? Why is one person stressed by rules and regulations and another is upset when situations are free flowing? The ten tips provide a partial answer.

As we taught these ten techniques, what we found was that not everyone needed the same things. For example, some people who came to our workshops, by their very nature, already had very well-developed social skills; they didn't need to be taught to build relationships. They shared this ability with a group of others who were very similarly inclined. There were others for whom analyzing problems and determining control and importance came naturally. Within the workshop, a subset of attendees shared this aptitude. We began to realize that our workshop participants fell into several natural groups.

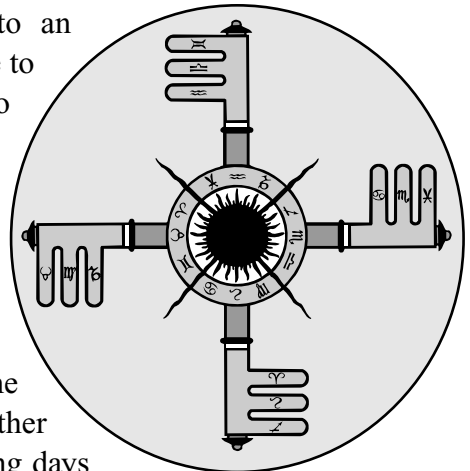
Dividing people into different categories, based on how they relate to the world, is not a new concept. One of the most popular schemata is that advanced by John Gray in his book *Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus*. Gray points to conflict between genders as a major cause of distress, and he has gained popularity by portraying men as logical and insensitive, or as being "from Mars," the war planet. He describes women as more emotional and caring, or "from Venus," the planet of love. Gray has built a communication system based on this premise. In our experience, Gray's gender-based theory holds up 70 to 80 percent of the time. However, it doesn't take into account women who by nature and temperament are highly logical and men who are warm and sensitive. His system doesn't play well with many women whose natural logical energy type finds them successfully working in banking, finance, and accounting—traditional "male" professions according to Gray's simplistic view. It also doesn't work for men whose natural energies move them into teaching and nursing, professions requiring so-called "female" traits. While Gray's work focuses on differences

between logical males and emotional females, it doesn't consider potential conflicts between grounding and creative energies.

In asking workshop participants what stressed them, we found that some stressors like commuting to work and financial difficulties, were universal. Other stressors could be clustered into four categories, or four energies. These energies paralleled what Steve and I understood about the roots of human personality differences.

As long as there has been oral tradition—as long as stories and myths have been passed from generation to generation—there has been a universal search to better understand our unique selves and our place in the world. Throughout the ages, storytellers have acted like a collective sieve for the plot lines, content, and meaning of human experience. We've been on a five-thousand-year-old quest clustering and clumping information, looking for similarities, trying to reduce the complexity of our human experience and personalities to profound simplicity. Our search has resulted in universal truths, themes, and archetypes we see repeated over and over. One of these concepts is that of the *four energies*.

Humanity has long recognized the different and unique energies of the four seasons—summer, fall, winter, and spring—and that they represent temperament. In about 400 B.C., the Greek physician Hippocrates taught his students to look for four types of bodily fluids: yellow bile, black bile, phlegm, and blood. According to Hippocrates, the preponderance of each fluid would explain an individual's nature. For example, being warm-hearted or sanguine was ascribed to an abundance of blood, while those prone to melancholy or depression had too much black bile. American Indian tradition describes how prayers were said to the four winds, each with their own characteristics. In the East, the day was born. The South brought warm breezes of comfort. The West ended the day and brought rest. The North pointed to the sharp air of Mother Nature and the need to prepare for long days



ahead. Native Americans used the four directions and the changing winds to evaluate situations and to warn them of what lay ahead.

More than fifty years ago, Austrian psychologist Carl Jung incorporated the concept of the four energies into his personality theory by explaining that our differences can be described, not by education or by gender, but by four *archetypes*. “It is one’s psychological type,” he wrote, “which from the outset, determines and limits a person’s judgement.” He said our psychological type impacts our relationship to the world, to other people, and to things.

These archetypes, Jung said, aren’t “a matter of choice or attitude.” They are hard-wired into us from birth. Templates for our personalities, these energy archetypes are clusters of traits that are found in the same pattern in many people. These archetypes influence how we take in information from the world and how we process it.

Was there a way to translate Jung’s four archetypes into something people could actually use to deal with stress and increase their power? What we came up with is the four energy types of PowerSource: two energies of perception (grounding or creative energy), and two energies of processing (logic or relationship energy). The PowerSource Profile in the next chapter will provide a deeper understanding of your own individual makeup.

But you needn’t go back to the psychological research on typology to understand personality archetypes or the PowerSource energies. You need look no further than today’s popular movies and television shows with their classic, and admittedly one-sided, view of human nature. We admire the purity of the logic archetype as depicted by Sherlock Holmes, Lieutenant Columbo, or *Star Trek’s* Spock. We relate to the grounding energy, the single-focused purpose and tenacity of Cookie in *Men of Honor*, Rocky in all five of his films, or young Jen in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Loveable Jimmy Stewart in *It’s a Wonderful Life* and Meg Ryan in *Sleepless in Seattle* embody the caring compassionate archetype of relationship energy. We admire the creative ingenuity of James Bond in the *007* movies, or Ethan Hunt, the hero in *Mission Impossible*. We know these characters. They embody the traits of

their dominant energy and of ours as well. We love these movies because they resonate with us. We know people who are like these characters. We are some of these characters. We recognize these types as universal truths, classic personalities, and different energies that we naturally understand and to which we all relate.

Nature Versus Nurture

While it's easy to recognize the universality of Jung's archetypal personalities or the four energy types of PowerSource, the question of where they come from remains. Are our unique personalities and energy types simply a matter of genetics? Can our uniqueness be explained by chromosomes and genes alone (nature)? Or are our personalities and our energy types better explained by our individual life experiences and opportunities (nurture)? Perhaps it's an intricate interplay of both.

Researchers are finding that some personality traits like shyness have a genetic basis. Harvard researcher Jerome Kagan monitored five hundred children for more than seventeen years and found that shyness is "hard-wired." He found that shy children, even as fetuses, had faster heart rates than more outgoing babies. Even before birth, they were predisposed to over-monitor and overreact to their environment. However, Kagan says, this genetic shyness predisposition can be overcome with effort and practice.

So is it nature or nurture that shapes us? Most scientists today believe that a gene (nature) gives only a probability for a certain trait. For the trait to be expressed, they say, it has to be turned on by an outside force (nurture). Findings indicate that the genetic predisposition for fear, shyness, and certain types of mental illness can be activated by exposure to high levels of stress.

The answer to our riddle of uniqueness most likely lies in the intricate interplay of inheritance and environment. And we're not likely to resolve the nature-nurture controversy here. We can say that every human being is like every other human being, like some other human beings, and like no other human beings. In other words, every one of us shares certain characteristics that are common to all human beings. For instance, if you have red hair, you share that characteristic with a certain number of other people with

Wired for Brain Power

New research on the human brain is giving us more clues about the essence of what makes each person unique and whether it's inheritance or environment that makes the difference. Of the 100,000 genes in the human body, 50,000 to 70,000 are involved in brain function. Genes control the brain's neurotransmitters and receptors, the pathways and sites that deliver and accept mental messages.

New technologies, like functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRIs), positron emission tomography (PET) scanners, and optical and electromagnetic signal imagers, are letting us actually look at the brain—the seat of personality—and are revealing that the brain is much more complicated than we ever imagined. The human brain has about 100 billion neurons and 100 trillion synapses (each capable of simultaneous thought) that communicate through an elaborate system of electrical and chemical signals.

This three pounds of squishy gray matter is capable of 20 million calculations per second!

red hair. But each of us, in many ways, is absolutely unique. No one on the planet shares your exact genetics, your life experiences, and your skills.

We acknowledge the universal nature of stress—it affects *all* of us. But, our emphasis is on providing you with a better understanding of how you are like *some* other people and how you are like *no one else*. There are four temperaments, or patterns, that you share with others who have energy traits similar to you. We recognize that this is only part of the equation. You have mastered certain acquired skills that, together with your innate abilities, your unique genetic inheritance, and your life experiences, make you who you are.

Stress Can Equal Power

One of the things that makes the PowerSource program different is that we see stress as a potentially positive force. For most of us, today's world offers more than ever before: more

choices, more challenges, more demands, more changes. We can do things and go places that our parents and grandparents never dreamed of. To reach this potential, we need strength. In this chapter, we've provided "Ten Plus One" tips. Now it's time to focus more explicitly on the one. Let's start with your PowerSource Profile.