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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Year after year, we begin the new year by making a list of promises and goals that we inevitably forget or abandon by mid-February. This year doesn’t have to follow that pattern, though. This year you’ll have New Year, New You, a curated collection of content from our expert authors and top titles designed to help you stick to your plans and achieve your goals. With concrete tips and practical advice to make positive changes in 2015, New Year, New You offers you the tools you need to tackle some of the most common New Year’s resolutions, addressing areas in which we could all benefit from a little help.

In this FreeBook, you’ll learn how to deepen your interpersonal relationships, develop a healthy attitude toward eating and dieting, deal with stress in and out of the workplace, and discover coping techniques to help you overcome your biggest challenges. Feel free to skip around and focus on the topics that are most important to you. And remember that if you’re in search of deeper levels of self-improvement, all of the titles featured in New Year, New You are available in full from our website.

CHAPTERS 1 & 2

In these two chapters from Letting Go of Self-Destructive Behaviors: A Workbook of Hope and Healing, author Lisa Ferentz helps you to change the way you see the behaviors you struggle with the most and develop a better understanding of how you relate to others. Chapter 2, “Connecting to Others and Managing Your Emotions”, includes an exercise that will allow you to reflect on how your childhood caretakers' responses to your emotional needs shaped you into the person you are today.

Ferentz is president and founder of the Institute for Advanced Psychotherapy Training and Education.

CHAPTER 3

If you are looking for some help with time management (and who isn’t?), “Define, Prioritize, and Choreograph What You Do” is the chapter for you. Here, J. Russell Ramsay and Anthony Rostain offer detailed instructions for how to best approach scheduling your day. Based in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, their outline will give you the tools you need to optimize your personal and professional time.

Ramsay and Rostain are co-founders and co-directors of the Adult ADHD Treatment and Research Program at the University of Pennsylvania’s Perelman School of Medicine.
CHAPTER 4

Judith Matz and Ellen Frankel lay out the principles of attuned eating in this chapter from *Beyond a Shadow of a Diet, 2nd edition*. The “Health at Any Size” paradigm that informs this chapter encourages you to pay attention to and trust in your body’s needs. Nurturing this healthy relationship with your body and your hunger will help you to look at food in a new way.

Matz and Frankel are experts in the field of eating disorder treatment and prevention with decades of experience.

CHAPTER 5

Do you know what your style is when it comes to intimacy with your partner? According to Barry and Emily McCarthy, authors of *Rekindling Desire, 2nd edition*, identifying your style and understanding how and why it works for you can do wonders for your intimate relationships. They explain why in this chapter, which features an exercise that will help you discover what’s best for you and your partner.

Husband and wife team Barry and Emily McCarthy have written 11 books together. Barry McCarthy is a clinical psychologist and certified sex therapist and Emily McCarthy brings a balanced, humanist perspective to the couple’s collaborations.

CHAPTER 6

In this chapter, authors Geoffrey L. Greif and Kathleen Holtz Deal explore the importance of couple friendships. Here, you’ll learn how couple friendships can enrich your relationship, what challenges couple friendships face, ways in which representations of couple friendships have shaped our understanding of their role in our lives, and how couples can work with each other to have enjoyable, balanced interactions.

Greif and Deal are both professors in the University of Maryland School of Social Work.

CHAPTER 7

In this selection from *Overcoming Your Workplace Stress: A CBT-based Self-help Guide*, author Martin Bamber outlines a variety of relaxation techniques that can be used both in and out of the office. From acupressure to yoga, you are sure to find a method that works for you among these choices.
INTRODUCTION

Bamber is the professional head of therapies for the New Yorkshire and York NHS Primary Care Trust.

CHAPTERS 8 & 9

These final chapters come from Effortless Mindfulness: Genuine Mental Health through Awakened Presence, by Lisa Dale Miller. Miller outlines the Buddhist psychology of happiness and delves into the meaning of some of the core concepts of mindfulness practice. Both chapters include exercises to help you develop a hands-on understanding of how these concepts affect your own journey toward well-being.

Miller is a California-based private practice psychotherapist who specializes in mindfulness psychotherapy and Buddhist psychology.
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CHAPTER 1

MOVING AWAY FROM THE DIAGNOSIS OF “I’M CRAZY”
THE STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH
It’s possible that you have tried a variety of strategies in an attempt to reduce or change your self-destructive behaviors. When those strategies don’t work in the long term it can leave you feeling like a “failure,” or cause you to lose faith in the possibility of real change happening. When you get stuck in this mindset and see yourself through a “defective” lens, you might assume that others will view you in a similar way. You might put a lot of emphasis on what is “wrong with you,” including the fact that you self-harm, and present yourself to others in ways that actually support this unfair picture of who you are and what you can accomplish. You might not realize you do this, but putting yourself down or carrying your body in a “closed” posture does give off negative messages about your sense of self-worth.

As you begin to look at your self-destructive behaviors, the best and most effective approach is a strengths-based one. This encourages you to view yourself in positive ways and to focus on what is “right” about you. It means re-defining your “symptoms” as necessary coping strategies that are the common results of trauma, abuse, or chronic emotional pain. There are four major principles that go along with the strengths-based approach: normalizing, universalizing, de-pathologizing, and re-framing.

Keep in mind that the confusing thoughts, feelings, and behavioral choices related to self-destructive acts can increase your sense of feeling “weird” or “different” and add layers of guilt and shame. As previously stated, one of the most valuable things for you to hold on to is the idea that everything about you makes sense given what you’ve experienced and where you’ve come from. When you can connect your emotions and behaviors to past trauma or overwhelming past or present stress, the pieces begin to fit together, and your “symptoms” will start to make more sense to you.

Thirty-two-year-old Marci shows us the value of this mindset when she says:

> Out of all the things I’ve learned in treatment, by far the most valuable and comforting is the idea that who I am and what I struggle with actually makes sense given my family background and the things I’ve been through. Whenever I start to panic about my thoughts, feelings or behaviors, I remind myself that I’m not crazy—that it all makes sense—and this always seems to calm me down.

Many of the “symptoms” that you struggle with have their roots in a desire to have a witness for your story, to zone out from painful feelings, or to self-soothe. It is completely normal and healthy to want to avoid pain and find a way to express your life experiences. Sadly, the ways in which you attempt to achieve these outcomes are
often harmful to your self-esteem and destructive to your mind and body. Yet it may be all you know and the only thing that has been modeled for you. Choosing to engage in self-destructive behaviors may be a way to re-create prior abuse or pain, and sometimes confirms that self-care wasn’t reinforced or available to you in childhood. You’re not making harmful choices because there is something wrong with you. You make harmful choices because no one ever showed you how to make good choices or made you feel worthy of good choices. True healing can begin when you learn to separate who you are from what happened to you.

Although every person who engages in self-destructive behavior has a unique life story, the sad truth is that countless people have experienced some form of sexual, physical, emotional, verbal, or psychological abuse, or neglect. Despite this reality, many survivors feel completely alone in their trauma experiences. Letting you know that you are not alone is a way to help you feel re-connected to others and the world at large. The feeling of being uniquely and negatively different, and therefore disconnected from others and misunderstood, can begin to go away when you learn that you are not alone in your suffering.

Stan is a 62-year-old who was emotionally neglected by his family. For most of his life he coped by drinking. He didn’t seek out treatment until he was much older:

> Until I started talking to you about my life and the pain I experienced growing up, I didn’t realize that other people felt the way I did. I always thought I was different, and I never wanted anyone to know about my past. I was embarrassed and ashamed of my family. I thought everyone else had great parents. I also didn’t realize that I was drinking to numb out my pain—and that I’m not the only one who does that, either.

It is equally important to know that when human beings are faced with dangerous or life threatening experiences, the natural and universal desire is to want to reach out to other people for comfort and support. That is a part of our “wiring” as a person. Unfortunately, sometimes the people we want to reach to for safety are the very same people who are hurting us. This is the case if your abuser is also your caretaker. Or it may be that while one of your caretakers is abusive the other is unable or unwilling to protect you, acting like a “non-protective bystander.” If no one is available to help you and you can’t reach out, you will go to the next possible “survival” response—which is called “fight or flight.”
Although your body wants you to “do something” when it gets threatened, oftentimes, fighting back or physically escaping is either impossible or unsafe. Typically, the perpetrator is much bigger and stronger than you. Sometimes, the abuser has a weapon, or even when they don’t, they use threatening words that make you too afraid to fight back. And in some cases, children don’t do fight or flight because they are so emotionally neglected that any attention that is paid to them, even when it’s abusive, still feels better than being invisible and forgotten. So, the last “survival option” that is available is the “freeze” response. Many survivors, especially those who were abused in childhood, rely most heavily on the freeze or “dissociative” response. This could mean holding very still, not breathing, pretending to be asleep, physically collapsing, staying silent, or “giving in and acting cooperative” to avoid being hurt more. If you did that you also could have mentally escaped or “gone away” in your mind, as a way to not really be in the moment and lessen the physical and emotional pain of what was happening to you. It is a brilliant strategy to mentally escape when you can’t physically escape, and it’s a logical and universal response. If this was your way of coping, you were creative and smart. Unfortunately, you might not see it that way, and you might be hard on yourself or blame yourself for “not doing enough” in response to threat.

Many people who witness someone else being hurt will also resort to the “freeze” state out of terror, hopelessness, powerlessness, or in response to threats from the abuser. In these cases, “freezing” is a common and necessary survival strategy, but can leave you feeling especially guilty. This can be rooted in “survivor guilt” or feeling badly about being spared the abuse. You can also feel guilty if you think you should have somehow protected or saved the other person. Know that the way in which you coped and survived was necessary and involuntary; your body and mind did whatever it needed to do to keep you alive. And it’s not reasonable to think that you actually could have saved someone else.

The tricky and complicated thing about these necessary childhood freeze responses is that they become your go-to strategy throughout life and can lead to new struggles, including, ironically, a state of helplessness and a loss of real power and control. This is because the freeze response makes you like a “deer in the headlights,” and keeps you trapped and stuck. The idea that the survival skills that once saved you in childhood are the same ones that can keep you helpless and victimized in adulthood may be a hard concept to initially understand. The idea of letting go of a strategy like dissociation might not make sense to you at first. Therefore, your confusion, initial resistance, or uncertainty about letting go of your “zoning out” makes sense and can feel very scary!
Another useful thing to know is that when you haven’t worked out traumatic experiences they leave behind real and often upsetting thoughts, body sensations, and emotions. Although it is certainly true that 10 people can experience the same trauma and respond in 10 different ways, it is equally true that people who have been traumatized can think, feel, and behave in very similar ways. If you do struggle with uncomfortable thoughts, overwhelming feelings, and body pain or discomfort, know that you are not alone and that your experiences are real and worthy of attention.

Hopefully, you are beginning to get the message that you are not “sick” because you self-harm. Holding on to this idea goes a long way towards reducing guilt and shame. When you mistakenly believe your issues and symptoms are proof that there is something wrong with you, it can leave you thinking, “I’m bad,” or “the abuse was my fault.” Instead, consider that “something bad happened to you,” or “the abuse was the fault and responsibility of the person who chose to hurt you.”
CHAPTER 2

CONNECTING TO OTHERS AND MANAGING YOUR EMOTIONS
One of the things that will really help you work through your self-destructive behaviors is to understand the role of attachment and its impact on your ability to handle your emotional states. Seeking out and maintaining safe, healthy attachment is a universal need, and a part of our biology as human beings. Attaching to people you love lets you feel protected, safe, physically comforted and soothed, and connected to others.

When you come into the world your first task is to successfully attach to the primary people who are taking care of you. You have to attach in order to survive because you are completely helpless and dependent! If your family is loving, predictable, safe, and emotionally available, then attaching is easy to do. As an infant you were born with a very limited number of resources for self-soothing. You had a sucking reflex, you could look away when something startled or upset you, and you could “zone out” or dissociate to tune out experiences that distressed your fragile system. Everything else that you learned to do was supposed to come from the soothing you got from your caretakers.

When you were upset as an infant you cried as a way to reach out to others, and you were appropriately communicating your desire for physical and emotional comfort and connection. If you were spoken to in a soothing singsong voice, rocked, stroked, and gazed at lovingly, your body relaxed and you felt comforted and calm. If your caretakers responded in these loving and soothing ways they were supporting your legitimate needs and teaching you to trust in the fact that others would be available to you when you needed them.

Therefore, the attachment pattern that got established for you was crucial, since it directly connected to your future ability to self-soothe and to manage your emotional states. If there was secure attachment, you looked for soothing and learned to trust that you would get what you needed. If you consistently received comfort, in time, you mastered the ability to use your own internal resources for self-soothing when your caretakers were temporarily unavailable. Over time, the positive “learned” experiences of comforting got imprinted on your body and you began to regulate yourself in ways that mirrored what your loving caretakers were doing. If you were allowed to develop healthy ways to self-soothe, it means that as you faced the future stressors of adolescence and adulthood you would be able to cope effectively and not feel the need to turn to unhealthy strategies such as cutting, bingeing, or drinking.

But if you do rely on these behaviors to cope and self-soothe, there is the possibility that you didn’t get the consistent, secure attachment and comforting responses you needed and deserved. This was not your fault. You had no control over emotionally
unavailable caretakers who may have entered into parenthood with their own unresolved trauma, addictions, significant mental illness, a chronic medical condition, intense family stressors, undiagnosed and untreated anxiety or depression. Sadly, many primary caretakers are emotionally unavailable or easily triggered by a child’s need for close attachment. In these situations, when the child cries out for comfort, the caretakers will go into a fight/flight or freeze response because they are threatened or overwhelmed by the sound of crying. This means the infant’s need for soothing will instead be met with parental aggression, avoidance, withdrawal, or spacing out.

If your caretakers were unavailable, inconsistent, abusive, easily triggered, dysfunctional, or violent, then your necessary task of attaching was complicated and compromised. You may have attempted to use crying, charming smiles, reaching out gestures, cooing and making other sounds to engage your disinterested or unresponsive caretakers. Their lack of response was not because you were unlovable or undeserving. You may have gotten the message that you were “emotionally needy,” “high maintenance,” “overly sensitive,” “demanding,” or “selfish.” The reality is parents often give children these labels when they are unable to meet a child’s legitimate emotional needs. It’s a way for parents to take the focus off of their own shortcomings. They put the blame on the child instead. But it is the adult’s obligation and responsibility to create a secure attachment, not the child’s. If your caretaker was neglectful, abusive, or non-protective, the impact was the same: you felt unworthy of love and attention. Over time, this repeated “childhood propaganda,” or untrue message, becomes accepted by you as a core truth. It may be one of the reasons why you stopped showing emotions and lost the ability to effectively communicate your needs to others. It also deprived you of the ability to learn how to do self-protection and self-care.

As you explore the possible connection between using self-destructive behaviors to manage overwhelming feelings and not having secure attachments in childhood, take a moment to revisit memories of how your caretakers responded when you were emotionally upset. In the journal exercise below, answer the questions from whatever memories you have, along with whatever information you’ve been given from siblings and other relatives about the caretaking you received growing up. You can focus on your caretaker’s words, expressed feelings, body language, and behavioral responses. The purpose of this is not to keep blaming your parents. Rather, it is to help you make sense out of why you still find it hard to manage your different emotions. When you answer these questions, know that whatever thoughts or feelings come up for you are normal and okay. Take the time you need to either breathe and re-group after finishing the statements, or to stop mid-way through if you start to feel too uncomfortable.
JOURNAL EXERCISE:
EXPLORING CARETAKER RESPONSES TO YOUR EMOTIONAL NEEDS

1. When I felt angry as a child, the typical response from my caretakers was:

2. If I became sad and started to cry, the typical response from my caretakers was:

3. If I needed encouragement or support for something that was challenging in my life, the typical response from my caretakers was:

4. When I was frightened and needed reassurance about my safety or wellbeing, the typical response from my caretakers was:

5. If I physically got hurt, the typical response from my caretakers was:

6. If I made a mistake of any kind, the typical response from my caretakers was:
Take a few moments and let your answers sink in. This may be the first time you’ve considered a possible connection between your caretakers’ responses to your physical, emotional, and psychological needs and the extent to which you do or don’t know how to engage in consistent self-care. If you grew up in a dysfunctional family, it is likely that legitimate emotional and physical needs continued to be downplayed or ignored, and you learned to feel a sense of shame for wanting anything. Even if your caretakers were not directly abusive, you might have been traumatized if they acted like non-protective bystanders. This means that although they did not directly harm you, their inability or unwillingness to shield you or get you away from someone harmful became a form of abuse and caretaker betrayal in and of itself.

Even as you continued to grow up, you needed to find ways to attach to unavailable caretakers. It was probably impossible for you to think of your parents as toxic, unloving, or bad: that reality would make it too difficult to attach and bond with them. Instead, you could unconsciously “make sense” out of your parents’ neglectful or abusive actions by taking ownership of the poor parenting, telling yourself you were not loved because there was something wrong with you. When you tell yourself “my parent isn’t bad, I am bad,” you can still successfully attach to that parent. Although this may have been necessary to believe at the time, self-blame may be at the core of the negative thoughts that haunt you and, in your mind, make it okay to use self-punishing behaviors.

Attachment patterns can be complicated in families. Obviously, the ideal kind of attachment is a “secure” one: caretakers are consistent, reliable, willing and able to bond, protect, and nurture. Other styles of attachment can be confusing. Sometimes a caretaker is available and responds appropriately and at other times their response to the same situation is totally inappropriate. Oftentimes, the people who are supposed to be the most supportive are the ones who are the scariest or they, themselves, are frightened and become helpless. Keep in mind that you can only learn what you witness and experience. So a lack of secure attachment and comfort will profoundly affect whether or not you develop your own tools for soothing later in life.

In addition, if you were in survival mode, you took on the behaviors, body postures, and movements that were most adaptive in your family. This means you acted, moved, and spoke in ways that kept you safe and were considered “acceptable” by caretakers. Often this manifests in collapsed or closed off posture, avoiding direct eye contact with others, and using a voice that is passive, not assertive. Although these responses kept you safe, you couldn’t gain mastery over healthier ways to
communicate or advocate for yourself. Your body language communicated a shamed self, and gave others information about how you expected to be treated in relationships. In the long term, this can create a tragic self-fulfilling prophecy, as predators seem to have radar for sensing more vulnerable children and adults, and are able to exploit and re-victimize them without consequences.
Chapter 3

Define, Prioritize, and Choreograph What You Do

Time and Task Management
Once you have a sense of your Comprehensive To-Do List, your prioritized Daily To-Do List, and a Daily Planner system, you have the basic tools with which to manage your time, tasks, effort, and energy. Akin to learning to play chess, while understanding the rules of the game and the defined moves for each of the pieces is essential, there is the distinct skill of playing the game and contending with an opponent. In a similar fashion, you may have developed many ornate lists and well-designed plans in the past but did not keep to them. Thus, it is in how you play the time management game that determines how well you manage your Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). This chapter will focus on the time management “moves” and tactics that will help you to put together the different skills and tools we have discussed thus far in order to follow through on plans.

**REVIEW THE DAILY PLANNER—EARLY AND OFTEN**

One of the principles we mentioned early in *The Adult ADHD Tool Kit* is the need to transform coping strategies into routine habits in your daily life. One of the foundational habits is the regular use and review of the Daily Planner, which is ideally done in tandem with making the Daily To-Do List.

We recommend that you establish specific times dedicated to sitting down, setting up, and tracking your plan for the day. Most people find that spending a 10-minute block of time either at the beginning or end of their day (or both) helps establish the habit of thinking through the plan and recording it in the Daily Planner. A stay-at-home parent may plan out a day the night before; an office worker often can start a work day by sitting down at his desk and setting out the day’s agenda; and workers whose jobs are more fluid, such as salespeople or contractors, often have to revise their plans throughout the day in order to accommodate opportunities that pop up. Time spent planning is also a good way to decide how to make use of unstructured or discretionary time. For example, it is beneficial to think through how you want to use your weekend or a 2-hour break between classes, either for recreation or to run errands that are tough to fit in during a typical day.

We recommend at least 10 minutes—an honest 600 seconds—for these daily planning sessions. We say an “honest” 10 minutes/600 seconds to point out that planning requires at least several minutes to accomplish adequately instead of the more common use of “10 minutes” to suggest an imprecise, but brief, time (e.g., “Give me 10 minutes to take care of things and then I’ll stop by your office”). Such a time frame is short enough that it is feasible, yet it provides you enough time for this crucial step in your day. You will soon find that this 10-minute investment reaps dividends by saving time and effort throughout the day that would otherwise be lost to scrambling to address problems that could have been avoided.
The Daily Planner is designed to be referenced throughout the day, allowing you to repeatedly revisit your plan and to keep you on track. You should be glancing at it throughout the day to see what you have completed, make adjustments to your plans (if needed) and remind yourself of what is coming up later that day, in the evening, or later that week. This habit allows you to keep tabs on your time and tasks in manageable increments and to identify some useful anchor points throughout the day that can help you to pace yourself as you move from task to task (e.g., “I will finish working on this project and then I have a lunch break.”).

As your Daily Planner assumes its place among your “tools of daily life” (i.e., keys, cell phone, wallet, purse, etc.), you will use it to schedule upcoming commitments, such as social events, exams, meetings, appointments, etc. as they arise. In addition to organizing your day, the time spent thinking about and planning your activities is a “priming” activity that increases the likelihood of behavioral follow-through.

**WRITE DOWN ALL OF YOUR EXISTING OBLIGATIONS**

The best way to get started using your Daily Planner is to populate that day’s schedule with all of your existing obligations for that day, even if they seem obvious and routine. Your Daily Planner is akin to a financial budget with a daily account of 24 hours to be “spent.” Your existing obligations represent standard expenses, such as utilities, taxes, etc. that are deducted from your budget. Thus, time in classes, meetings at work, pick-up times from preschool, yoga class, etc. all are entered into your Planner to represent deductions from your 24 hours.

Thinking through the flow of your day and your different roles is another way to recognize all that you already get done, which adults with ADHD often underestimate. Commitments such as a meeting with a teacher at school, an errand to run for your church or synagogue, picking up a package at the post office, attending a review session at school, or a scheduled meeting at work all belong in the planner. Make sure to include planned exercise, “appointment television,” or a planned get-together with a friend. Remember to account for travel times and to reserve time for basic self-care, namely the morning wake-up routine, meals, various household chores, and sleep. The Daily Planner is a coping tool that externalizes time and allows you to see how all of your tasks and obligations fit together rather than relying on your “sense” of time, which is often faulty.

Some days schedules will include obligations specific to a particular day of the week, such as attending religious services, a weekly exercise class, or a standing volunteer commitment. Of course, the Daily Planner is a useful tool for keeping track of less
frequent, stand-alone obligations, such as semiannual dental or medical visits, meeting with an accountant during tax season, parent-teacher conferences, or other professional appointments.

TAKE AWAY 4.1. REVIEWING YOUR DAILY PLANNER

1. Review your Daily Planner at the start of your day (or night before).
2. Glance at, review, and “refresh” your Daily Planner throughout the day to give yourself reminders of upcoming tasks and plans.
3. If your situation involves frequent changes to your plans, have some set times that you can make the adjustments to your Daily Planner.
4. Record any new, future commitments in your Daily Planner as they arise.
5. Use your Daily Planner to keep track of what you have completed in addition to checking off tasks from your Daily To-Do List.
6. Repeat.

TAKE AWAY 4.2 USING YOUR DAILY PLANNER

1. Get your Daily Planner and take it to a reduced distraction setting.
2. Devote at least 10 minutes (600 seconds) to planning your day.
3. Review any obligations you have already recorded in your Planner.
4. Record any known commitments or obligations for that day, including meetings at work, classes, picking up and dropping off from school, etc.
5. Reserve times for self-care tasks, such as sleep, meals, exercise.
6. Leave adequate buffer time between tasks for breaks, commuting, etc.
7. Make appointments for tasks from your Daily To-Do List.
8. Make sure that tasks in #7 are defined in reasonable, behavioral terms.
9. Schedule “downtime” and other recreational or social activities.
10. Make sure the order of tasks throughout your day makes sense and is realistic.
11. Trust the plan—focus on engaging in your first task and take it one step at a time.
12. Refer to your Daily Planner frequently throughout the day.
DEFINE TASKS FOR YOUR DAILY TO-DO LIST

After establishing the main obligations and tasks in your day, it is important to coordinate your schedule with your Daily To-Do List, the portable record of specific priority tasks for that day. Items on your Daily To-Do List can be scheduled in your Daily Planner, such as running a special errand or devoting time to an important project for work or school. For example, you may have a standing 2 p.m. class each Monday that is listed in your Daily Planner as an obligation, but you need not put that on your Daily To-Do List. If you are scheduled to make a presentation in the next meeting of that class, however, you can reserve the break before that class in your Planner for your final preparations, which is a task entered on the Daily To-Do List.

The Daily Planner is akin to the Google Maps feature in which you can start with a wide view of the general area and the route you will take. Similar to the map feature, you can telescope in on progressively more detailed views of individual weeks, days, and portions of a single day. The Daily To-Do List becomes the street level view in which, after defining the time of day it will be performed, you arrive at that task for performance using step-by-step directions. Of course, as with good directions, it is important to have useful and accurate steps for these tasks, which we discuss next.

BREAKING DOWN A TASK INTO ITS STEPS

There are a series of philosophical problems known as Zeno’s paradoxes. One of them says that as you attempt to leave a room, you must first reach the midpoint between you and the exit. As you continue toward the doorway, you will again reach the new midpoint, with each successive attempt to exit the room requiring you to reach the next midpoint. The paradox is that you should be unable to leave a room because you can infinitely halve the distance to the exit without ever getting out of the room.

You may often feel like you are the person trying to leave the room when facing tasks on your Daily To-Do List inasmuch as it seems as though you can never get them started. We use the Zeno’s paradox example to illustrate that most tasks you will encounter can be broken down into ever-smaller component steps. More importantly, taking the right first step on a task gives you the sense that “I can do this,” a seemingly small matter that holds big rewards.

When setting out your priority tasks, you will encounter some undertakings that activate a sense of dread, an overwhelmed feeling, or thoughts that you cannot deal with them. Rather than automatically avoiding them (“I can’t handle this now!”), the first step is to consider what you want to accomplish and if your task, at least as you
currently think of it, is too big or vague. The overall objective is still important, such as “organize my room” or “work on paper for school,” but framed in such broad terms it is hard to picture a way to get started.

As with the example of leaving a room, you can divide the large project into its component steps. Thus, “organize my room” is broken down into the separate tasks of removing clutter that does not belong in the room, deciding what items will stay in the room, and identifying where each of these items will be stored. Even the first step of removing clutter might be too stressful. If that is the case, this step can be shrunk down to focus on a specific item, such as “I will start by picking up any dishes in my room and take them to the kitchen.”

Similarly, a work or school project is comprised of different steps. There may be data that need to be compiled or analyzed before delving into the monthly report write-up. Time spent organizing one’s thoughts or outlining a paper is a helpful way for a student to begin a project without having to jump right into writing. Even once you have started your write-up, you may procrastinate on getting back to the unfinished paper. The goal of “continue to write the report” seems daunting, so, an initial, smaller step toward this end can be framed as “I will read the last paragraph I wrote and I will then write the first sentence of the next paragraph.”

The principles to remember here are to define the task in simple and behavioral terms in order to turn the task objective into an action you can perform. You will be able to find a way to reduce most tasks into the smallest, behavioral first step that you feel capable to perform in order to overcome procrastination. A straightforward way to first “touch” many work and school projects is to make sure you have accurate information about the parameters of the task, due date, etc. (e.g., “I will check the syllabus to make sure I am clear about the assignment.”). Simply opening the computer file for a work project or picking up the textbook to be read for a class represent simple action steps that greatly increase the likelihood of taking a next step on the task [see Table 4.1].
### TABLE 4.1 ▶ EXAMPLE OF BREAKING DOWN A TASK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task: Monthly Report due in two weeks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Save last month’s report as a template for this month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Enter basic demographic information relevant to this month into template.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Send e-mail reminders to department heads for their monthly data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Spend 30 minutes on Friday confirming my data are entered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Spend 60 minutes on Saturday at 10 a.m. analyzing my data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Enter numbers into template on Monday at 9 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Spend 45 minutes on Tuesday modifying summaries in template to match new data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Spend 45 minutes on Thursday entering data and summaries from other departments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Spent 45 minutes on Saturday at 10 a.m. editing and proofreading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Submit report by e-mail on Monday at 9 a.m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Time spent visualizing and planning the task itself represents a small first step of engagement and is an exposure exercise that fosters your ability to face something that you typically avoid and escape. A spreadsheet, a sheet of paper, or index cards can be used to tease apart the different steps of a large project steps, including your start point, the desired end point, and all the steps in between. This exercise is particularly beneficial when a task is large and has a future deadline. This sort of project requires “doing a little bit” each day rather than being stuck doing everything at the last minute in a panic. Even if you plan to devote an hour or two on a single day to a task, such as chores, errands, or yard work, it is useful to have a plan for breaking down and ordering your steps (including a reward). Breaking a task down into a manageable step is an essential strategy to help you to get started and to stay on track.
TAKE AWAY 4.3. DEFINE TASKS IN BEHAVIORAL TERMS

1. Look at the tasks on your Daily To-Do List.
2. See if any tasks are worded in ways that seem overwhelming or are too broad (e.g., “write paper” or “clean house”).
3. Reword the task in terms of a smaller, more specific step that seems reasonable and doable (e.g., “reread last paragraph of paper” or “unload dishwasher”).
4. Keep doing #3 until you have defined a task as an action that you are confident that you will carry out.
5. Use this redefined task on your Daily To-Do List. It will get you started.

COMMUTING AND OTHER BUFFER TIMES

When ordering coffee, the barista may ask, “Do you want room for cream?” If your cup is filled to the rim, you will not have enough room to prepare your drink to your liking and will likely end up spilling it. Likewise, it is easier to begin with a modest schedule and then add tasks than it is to have an overly ambitious plan and running the risk of becoming overwhelmed by having too much to do—and ultimately not doing any of it. Hence, it is important to leave adequate time between tasks when making your daily schedule.

Commuting time offers a good example of the buffer time principle. Our ADHD program is located in the wonderful city of Philadelphia. One of the few things not so wonderful about Philadelphia is the traffic and parking situation. When helping people review their daily plans that involve navigating the roadways of the Greater Philadelphia area, we see that people fall into the “60 mile-per-hour” planning error. That is, when scheduling an appointment that involves, say, a 15-mile drive to the office, the assumption is, “It will take me about 15 minutes to get to the appointment,” based on the 1-mile-per-minute calculation when traveling at highway speed. However, this calculation involves the assumption that the person will leave home on time, will get into a car already moving at highway speed, will maintain that rate the entire trip (unimpeded by traffic, stoplights, or weather), and will find open parking at the front door of the office building before stepping directly into a waiting elevator in the lobby. Not only is there no room for error, but this plan goes against any reasonable expectation of driving conditions in and around Philly (or most
anywhere else). This mindset is an example of how “positive thinking” is not necessarily adaptive. In fact, this situation usually stems less from a positive bias than it does from disregarding all the factors that necessitate factoring in buffer time.

A useful piece of advice for calculating buffer times was provided to us when discussing this topic with one of our patients who owned a boat. He said that a guideline used by boat owners to help them set realistic expectations for how long maintenance and repairs to their crafts will take is, “However long you think the job will take, double the number and add an increment of time.” Thus, if you think a boat repair will take 2 hours, plan for it to take 4 days; if you think it will take 4 days, expect it will take 8 weeks, etc.

Although not meant to be followed literally, the spirit of the idea is that it is a useful practice to err on the side of allowing more rather than less time for commuting or other tasks for which people do not often calculate how long they require. Activities such as the morning routine for getting ready for work, various household chores, food shopping, time spent sitting in the waiting room before seeing a physician, etc. often take up more time than we anticipate. In fact, it is a useful experiment to actually use a timer to get an accurate sense of how long these tasks really take in order make more realistic plans.

SCHEDULING UNSTRUCTURED, DISCRETIONARY, AND DOWNTIME

People often underutilize their Daily Planners. These planners are viewed as tools solely for keeping track of academic or work obligations, or professional appointments. While these engagements are important to record, the Daily Planner can be used to manage all the remaining slots in your day. This is not meant to imply that you must be obsessively and completely scheduled with obligations or productive tasks from morning until night; rather, you can use the Planner to make informed decisions about how to make use of your day, your time, and your energy—how you “spend yourself,” to return to our financial budget metaphor.

For example, many of our patients say that they are more productive at work and school when they use these time management and planning skills. When reaching the weekend or a vacation day, however, they decide that they will go with the flow and view these days as not requiring a plan. By the time they have to go back to their regular schedule, they often describe feeling disappointed that they did not make better use of their free time, including recreational pursuits. ADHD adults who work from home or otherwise set up their own schedule, such as a graduate student
working on a thesis, face the unique situation of having priority work tasks to complete without having the external organizational scaffolding provided by a work or school schedule.

The same strategies that improve efficiency during the work week are also helpful when planning weekends or other unstructured time. The Daily Planner is used to plan the “flow of the day” when working from home, to make use of free time in the midst of a typical work/school day, or to make plans for days off. When planning work at home, it is important to define specific projects to which to devote time that day, and better still, when you define specific and behavioral To-Do tasks connected to these projects. Each of the steps can then be performed within realistic time frames, including a start time and end time for these tasks. In a similar fashion, making plans for weekend activities helps ensure that you will have enough recreational and social activities, as well as taking care of a few errands in order to feel that you are on top of things.

We are big believers in scheduling downtime. It is important to protect time for things that you find enjoyable, relaxing, and regenerative, which help reward your follow-through on other tasks. Hence, you may decide to spend the hour while your child is having her music lesson sitting in your car with your eyes closed, or playing a game on your computer tablet. Breaks in your day can also be used to take care of nagging chores, to study in the library between classes, or to exercise. Discretionary time at work can be used to catch up on e-mails or other administrative tasks that are not priorities at other times. At home, you may spend some downtime surfing the Internet, watching television, or otherwise “vegging out” [see Table 4.2].

We like the phrase used in reference to vitamins and minerals in breakfast cereal ads: “recommended daily allowance.” A well-balanced daily schedule includes your “recommended daily allowance” of work, school, and other obligations, but it is important to have enough time for exercise, hobbies, downtime, etc. to maintain your overall well-being.
### TABLE 4.2  EXAMPLE OF A DAILY PLAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 a.m. - 6 a.m.</td>
<td>Sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 a.m. - 7 a.m.</td>
<td>6:30 a.m. Wake up, shower, dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 a.m. - 8 a.m.</td>
<td>7-7:30 a.m. Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Walk dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 a.m. - 9 a.m.</td>
<td>Leave for train by 7:50 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 a.m. - 10 a.m.</td>
<td>9-9:10 a.m. Train to work, walk to office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:10-10 a.m.</td>
<td>10 a.m. - 11 a.m. Check e-mails, return phone calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 a.m. - 11 a.m.</td>
<td>10-10:30 a.m. Staff meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 a.m. - 12 noon</td>
<td>11:55 a.m. - 12 noon To Do = Schedule oil change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 noon - 1 p.m.</td>
<td>Lunch break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 p.m. - 2 p.m.</td>
<td>1-1:45 p.m. To Do = Monthly Report – Start by entering summary data in introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:45-2 p.m.</td>
<td>2 p.m. - 3 p.m. Discretionary work time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 p.m. - 4 p.m. Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3:30-4 p.m. Organize notes, enter data into spreadsheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 p.m. - 5 p.m.</td>
<td>4:45-5 p.m. E-mails, calls, confirm tomorrow’s meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 p.m. - 6 p.m.</td>
<td>6 p.m. To Do = Pick up dry cleaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 p.m. - 7 p.m.</td>
<td>7-7:30 p.m. Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30-8 p.m.</td>
<td>8 p.m. - 9 p.m. Clean up, downtime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 p.m. - 9 p.m.</td>
<td>8-8:30 p.m. Downtime (8:25 p.m. – put on workout clothes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30-9 p.m.</td>
<td>9 p.m. - 10 p.m. Treadmill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 p.m. - 10 p.m.</td>
<td>10 p.m. - 11 p.m. Shower, choose clothes for work, downtime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 p.m. - 11 p.m.</td>
<td>Downtime, to bed at 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 :: DEFINE, PRIORITIZE, AND CHOREOGRAPH WHAT YOU DO
TIME AND TASK MANAGEMENT

CHOREOGRAPHY AND REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

The movie *Apollo 13* was a dramatized account of a manned space mission to the Moon in 1970 that was abandoned in mid-flight due to mechanical difficulties. The objective of the mission changed from landing on the Moon to safely returning the astronauts to Earth. The damaged spacecraft carrying the astronauts had limited battery power to deliver to the different computer systems needed for reentry into the Earth's atmosphere. The NASA engineers on the ground had to determine the correct sequence for reactivating these systems that would conserve enough energy without draining the batteries. We use this metaphor to illustrate that the use of the Daily Planner and Daily To-Do List involves not only finding places for all the prioritized tasks for that day, but also paying attention to the sequencing and ordering of these tasks. It is important to remember that you are managing your effort and energy throughout the day, too.

Some adults with ADHD prioritize early morning exercise, which helps them to focus on high-priority tasks at the start of the day, later moving on to other tasks. Other people prefer to “warm up” with lower priority administrative tasks at the start of the day before facing higher-priority, more challenging tasks. Students learn that there are certain times during the day that are better for them to focus on some academic tasks more than others, such as devoting morning times for writing assignments and afternoons to assigned readings. Similarly, certain pivot points during the day can be identified as good times for certain mundane tasks, such as going through the mail as soon as you arrive home from work or catching up on e-mails for 15 minutes after returning from a lunch break at work. It is important to figure out “how your brain works” in order to set up your schedule accordingly and to honestly assess how well your choreography works. One person’s adaptive warm-up task is someone else’s escape behavior. The key is to find what is realistic and sustainable for you.

MAKE ADJUSTMENTS, AS NEEDED

Life happens. Situations will inevitably arise that require you to adjust your expectations and your plans, such as leaving work to pick up a sick child from school or taking care of an emergency car repair. Apart from the logistics of reorganizing your schedule, the Daily Planner provides a coping tool for managing, or at least limiting the emotional stress that comes with unexpected changes. Referencing your Planner lets you see what changes you must make and how to make them. There may be sacrifices that you will have to make, such as skipping a trip to the gym or rescheduling an appointment in order to complete a project by a deadline. Having a record of your scheduled
commitments, however, provides a framework with which to deal with the situation by taking the necessary steps to cancel and reschedule meetings, or any other adjustments that must be made in order to effectively “manage the problem.”

In addition to handling an unexpected change to your schedule, the Daily Planner helps you to determine if the event was truly unexpected or if it resulted from procrastination or underestimating the priority of certain tasks. These skills and systems provide you with a more organized way to learn from mistakes and to decrease their recurrence.

**DO IT NOW**

There is a saying that “time is nature’s way to keep everything from happening all at once” [attributed to the physicist John Archibald Wheeler]. This quote encapsulates one of the goals of the Daily Planner and the time and task management strategies—to identify and organize the myriad responsibilities, commitments, and endeavors you face within the framework of the Daily Planner. Thus, you can focus on the task you want to perform at 10 a.m. and strategically forget about the one you have scheduled for 4:30 p.m. because you have it recorded and will get to it at its appointed time.

Rather than being overwhelmed by everything you have to do, the Daily Planner and Daily To-Do List provide placeholders for individual tasks. Your focus switches to engagement in the task, getting it done, and then getting it off the To-Do List. Breaking down tasks into manageable, behavioral targets further increases the likelihood of follow-through. By doing so, you will experience the satisfaction of task completion, which is positive reinforcement for getting things done. These reward experiences create momentum that will increase your ability to follow through on endeavors that are meaningful.

The use of time and task management strategies provides a blueprint or recipe for follow-through. However, similar to a blueprint or a recipe, if it is not followed, there is nothing to show for it. While you will likely notice improvements in your ability to organize and manage tasks, coping with adult ADHD requires ongoing diligence. It is normal to encounter difficulties with the ongoing implementation of these skills and with follow-through on tasks, akin to keeping up with an exercise routine.
CHAPTER 4
PRINCIPLES OF ATTUNED EATING
Common to all human beings is our need to have a relationship with food. Eating is one of our most basic needs, from the moment we arrive in the world, and throughout the rest of our lives. You may think about your eating all the time, or you may rarely give it a thought. Regardless of how conscious or unconscious this process is for you, you make decisions about food on a daily basis. Although eating is a pleasurable experience for most people, it is really a physiological process that involves a need and satiation of that need. Consider the following questions:

- Do you know when you are hungry?
- Do you eat when you are hungry?
- Do you ask yourself what you are hungry for?
- Do you do your best to get what you are hungry for? Do you stop when you are full/satisfied?

To the extent you answered “yes” to these questions, you are in tune with your body’s natural hunger signals. To the extent that you replied “no” to these statements, you may be out of touch with your true hunger needs.

Moving from a diet approach to attuned eating for the treatment of binge or compulsive eating helps clients return to a normal relationship with food. These concepts of normal eating address the questions of when to eat, what to eat, and how much to eat. Researchers, dieticians, and therapists who developed these ideas agree that human beings have natural, internal instincts, which can reliably direct them in regulating their food choices. Clients who display symptoms of binge or compulsive eating have lost their innate ability to regulate their hunger and satiation. Regardless of whether this lack of attunement comes from years of dieting, the use of food for affect regulation, or both, the first step in the process of curing overeating is for clients to relearn how to accurately listen to and trust their bodies’ signals.

Consider for a moment whether you are a “natural” eater who responds most of the time to your internal cues for hunger and satiation. Or, do you make food choices based on other external factors such as what you believe is “good” or “bad” to eat? Like clients, therapists are constantly bombarded with messages from family, health practitioners, and the media about what and how to eat. This information may influence you because of concerns about weight and health. Adjustments to eating that stem from outside sources and still conform to natural hunger signals can enhance physical and emotional well-being. However, if these recommendations, which are often contradictory and change substantially over the years, undermine the connection to your body’s needs, competency to self-regulate diminishes.
The Renfrew Center, a major eating disorder treatment center, offers a simple checklist to help you reflect more thoroughly on your own attitudes toward eating. This tool can be used with clients to determine their relationship with food.

1. Can you eat when you are hungry and quit when you are satisfied?
2. Do you stop eating because you think you should (as opposed to because your body is satisfied)?
3. Do you make food choices based on foods you enjoy?
4. Do you become physically uncomfortable (such as weak, tired, dizzy, a headache) when you under-eat or diet?
5. Do you feel that your food selections are a combination of “healthy foods” and pleasurable foods?
6. Do you have to eat in a certain pattern—always three meals a day or always at a certain time of day?
7. Do you trust that if you eat when you are hungry and stop when you are satisfied, you will not get fat?
8. Do you feel guilty when you eat to the point that you are stuffed and uncomfortable?
9. Can you balance the time you give to thoughts about food, weight and dieting with other important aspects of your life, such as relationships, work and self-development?
10. Do you watch what other people eat to determine what you will eat?
11. Can you leave some cookies on the plate because you know you can have some again tomorrow?
12. Do you usually pick foods based on the calorie content?
Scoring: Add up all the “no” responses to the odd-numbered questions. Give one point for each “no” and put that number here ___.

Add up all the “yes” responses to the even-numbered questions. Give one point for each “yes” and put that number here ___.

Total both the above numbers here ___.

INTERPRETATION:

Scores between 0 and 3. These scores indicate a healthy attitude toward food and eating.

Scores between 4 and 8. These scores suggest that cultural pressures about appearance and ideas about how much and what kinds of foods to eat may be negatively affecting self-acceptance and overall happiness. Exploring these issues may be helpful.

Scores between 9 and 12. These scores suggest serious issues with food, ranging from food obsession to an eating disorder. These issues could be interfering with daily life and may negatively affect overall health. Professional assistance is recommended to deal with thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to food and body image. Medical evaluation and intervention may also be needed to address health concerns. (Copyright © The Renfrew Center, 2003.)

Another useful tool for assessing eating behaviors, developed by Marjorie Feinson, Ph.D, can be found in Appendix C of Beyond a Shadow of a Diet, 2nd edition.

A PARADIGM FOR NORMAL EATING

The notion that people can be trusted to be in charge of their own eating, without outside interference, was first documented by Clara Davis in 1928. A researcher in the area of child development, Davis found that infants displayed an innate ability to regulate their food intake, both in terms of caloric content and nutritional value, when they were allowed to select their own diets over a period of several months. At the same time, however, eating patterns varied greatly from feeding to feeding so that at times a child “ate like a bird” while at other times she “ate like a horse.” Yet all of these children showed good health and growth patterns.

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1 The Renfrew Center (2003). With permission: The Renfrew Center was established in 1985 as the nation’s first free-standing facility created exclusively for women with eating disorders. Since then, it has treated more than 35,000 women and adolescent girls aged 14 and older. For more information about eating disorders, treatment, and professional resources, please call The Renfrew Center at 1-800-RENFREW or visit its website at www.renfrew.org.

More recently, researcher Leann Birch and her colleagues have proven repeatedly that children are born knowing how to regulate their food intake. One study, which appeared in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, found that while children’s caloric intake varied greatly from meal to meal, the daily amount of energy consumption remained relatively consistent over a 24-hour period as children adjusted the amount they ate at successive meals. Another research study found that the more parents tried to control their children’s eating behavior through practices such as food rewards, threats, and bribes, the less able these preschoolers were to self-regulate. This research suggests that when children are left to their own devices, they are extremely capable of knowing how to eat, but that external influences negatively affect this innate ability. The authors further conclude that parents who are concerned about their own weight and attempt to control their food intake with dieting behavior are more likely to attempt to control their children’s eating patterns. The message from this type of research is that human beings have an innate capacity to respond to internal cues for hunger and satiation, which can persist if supported by the familial environment, but which can also diminish or disappear when external sources interfere. For the binge or compulsive eater, reconnecting with these natural cues is essential in the process of making peace with food.

Since the 2004 edition of *Beyond a Shadow of a Diet*, there’s been a multitude of research studies confirming the efficacy of eating based on internal hunger cues. For example, research by Smith and Hawks shows that people who are intuitive eaters, as described by Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch, have a more diverse diet, lower body mass index, and take more pleasure in their eating than non-intuitive eaters. In 2006, Tracy Tylka studied nearly 1,300 college women and found that those scoring higher on the Intuitive Eating Scale had higher body satisfaction, self-esteem, and satisfaction with life. Women diagnosed with BED showed a significant reduction in binge eating using Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training, another model that promotes helping people reconnect to their natural hunger signals. In a 2013 study of young adults, researchers found that those who reported trusting their body to tell them how much to eat were less likely to engage in disordered eating behaviors compared with those that did not trust their internal cues. Females who reported that they used their physical signal of fullness to stop eating had reduced risk of chronic dieting and binge eating compared with those who do not stop eating when full.

Therapists Jane Hirschmann and Carol Munter have written extensively on the process of relearning to eat based on internal, physical cues of hunger and satiation, which they refer to as demand feeding for adults. They borrow a familiar concept that has widespread acceptance regarding the care of infants. Demand feeding for

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newborns directs that when a baby cries in hunger, the parent or caretaker offers the breast or bottle. The infant sucks until she is satiated, and then turns away. The intake of milk will vary from feeding to feeding. The length of time between feedings will also vary; the infant may signal hunger again in 30 minutes, an hour, or several hours, at which time sustenance is offered again. Rather than adhering to a rigid schedule, the child is trusted to accurately communicate her needs. The adult who responds to these needs helps the child establish trust and experience the physical and emotional satisfaction of good caretaking. According to Hirschmann and Munter, this attunement teaches the child that she can trust the outside world to take care of her. She learns that her needs are important and responded to, creating a sense of safety and security.

As the child grows older, numerous factors can interfere with her natural ability to identify hunger needs and ensure an attuned response. Parents concerned about nutritional needs may “force” the child to eat foods she does not like or restrict foods that she does enjoy. The structure of family meal times or school may prevent the child from being able to eat when she is hungry, or demand that she eat when she is not. As she becomes more aware of her body size and the culture of dieting, she may become caught in the diet roller coaster at a young age, thereby compromising her body’s ability to self-regulate. Overeating to manage emotions can further move this child away from her own internal signals to tell her when, what, and how much to eat.

This method of demand feeding for adult helps clients reestablish the body–hunger connection. As the non-diet movement has rapidly grown, professionals use different terms to describe this process, including intuitive eating, mindful eating, and attuned eating; we prefer the term attuned eating because it captures the necessity of tuning into oneself to determine when, what, and how much to eat. When compulsive and binge eaters can move in the direction of eating when they are physically hungry, eating exactly what they are hungry for, and stopping when satisfied, they will experience tremendous satisfaction both physically and psychologically. The collection of these experiences helps clients end the diet–binge cycle and normalize their relationship with food. They can return to the natural process of eating in which they can trust themselves and feel calm around food.

The benefits of regaining this attunement with eating do not end with this accomplishment, but extend to psychological aspects of clients’ functioning. As Hirschmann and Munter write, “Each time you feed yourself when you are hungry, you demonstrate that you are able to care for yourself in an attuned way. The more reliable you are as a self-feeder, the more emotionally secure you will feel and the
Helping clients end binge or compulsive eating often involves the exploration of emotional issues and the development of new ways to cope with problems. It is through the process of learning to eat in a normal, attuned fashion that clients strengthen their internal resources. Increased self-esteem, trust in the ability to care for and nurture the self, and entitlement to identify and respond to needs are all aspects of the client’s sense of self that are positively influenced just through the process of learning to eat in an attuned manner. As her overeating decreases, this ultimately places therapist and client in a strong position to address the underlying issues and conflicts that may exist.

Attuned eating offers people a method to work their way out of overeating problems. Unlike diets, where rules must be strictly followed to achieve results and the dieter is judged as good or bad based on her adherence, we offer a process whose principles form a solid basis toward normalizing eating and resolving psychological issues. Clients have a tendency to want to turn these guidelines into a new set of rules, preferring the structure of an external source to the idea of relying on themselves to direct their eating. There is frequently a wish to make the non-diet into a new diet.

At each step of the way, implementing attuned eating furthers your client toward her goal of ending binge or compulsive eating. Yet both client and therapist must understand that her difficulties in making use of these guidelines at various points in the process signal her trouble spots and warrant exploration. She is not “bad” for eating past fullness; rather, there is meaning in her behavior that is very important and worthy of understanding. The attuned eating approach offers a road map, and the path for each client will be unique to her own set of circumstances.

HUNGER

The first step in helping your client become an attuned eater is to help her identify physiological hunger. If you ask a binge or compulsive eater how she decides when to eat, you will find that her reach for food has very little to do with internal cues. She may tell you that she tries to eat at certain times of the day, that many foods in her world are too hard to resist, that various feelings trigger emotional eating, that she eats every time she turns on the TV, or that she just loves to eat. Some clients who struggle with overeating will say that they know what it feels like to get hungry, and

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that they do get hungry sometimes. However, many binge and compulsive eaters will
tell you that they rarely experience physical hunger; in fact, they are no longer sure
how true hunger feels in their bodies. Your task at this point is to assist your client in
recognizing the signs of physiological hunger so that she can begin to reconnect her
bodily needs with the act of feeding herself. It is also helpful to remind your client
that food actually tastes better when she is physically hungry.

IDENTIFYING PHYSICAL HUNGER

Hunger is a physiological event, which is generally experienced in the stomach. It is
useful to check in with your client to make sure she knows that her stomach is located
in the belly or abdominal area. Some clients point below the area, while others may
confuse feelings of anxiety experienced above the stomach as signs of hunger.

If you ask people how they know when they are hungry, typical responses include:
• Growling stomach
• Weakness
• Emptiness in stomach
• Light-headedness
• Headache
• Irritability
• Fatigue
• Shakiness

All of these answers indicate physical sensations, and recognizing these sensations is
essential in your client’s ability to move in the direction of attuned eating. Symptoms such
as weakness, light-headedness, headaches, irritability, and shakiness indicate that a
person has waited too long to eat and is now physically uncomfortable. While a growling
stomach can indicate physical hunger, stomachs can growl at other times, such as
during digestion. Therefore, presenting the concept of emptiness or a gnawing feeling in
the stomach provides a more accurate cue for clients returning to normal eating.

As clients first attempt to identify physiological hunger, they often recognize their
hunger only once it has reached an extreme, and they feel they are “starving.” Thus,
they experience the unpleasant effects of a body that is desperate for sustenance.
If waiting for hunger means headaches, weakness, or crabiness, there is not much
incentive to hold out for these signals.
In an attempt to help clients recognize and identify different degrees of hunger, Matz and Grannick developed the Hunger Scale. The purpose of this instrument is to teach compulsive and binge eaters how to notice variations in the physical sensations of their stomach.

**HUNGERSCALE**

This scale intentionally uses words to help clients label different levels of hunger and fullness so that they can increase their ability to notice internal states. Your client may also find it useful to assign numbers to the Hunger Scale, so that 1 means “starving,” 5 means “not hungry/not full,” and 9 means “stuffed.” Using this method, a client would ideally keep herself in the range of about 3 to 7 so that she does not become too hungry or overfull. At the same time, these numbers should not be turned into new diet rules where a client reports that she is “good” because she ate at a 3 or “bad” because she ate to a 9. Rather, both forms of the Hunger Scale offer guidelines to discuss her journey toward becoming an attuned eater.

Consider the Hunger Scale for a moment and think about your own eating. Where do you usually fall when you make a decision to eat? Does this level represent an attunement to your physical hunger? If no, can you imagine trying to move in the direction of responding more accurately to your physical cues? How can you best use this information to assist your clients in their own process?
Probably everyone has had the experience of waiting too long to eat and reaching the range of "starving" on the Hunger Scale. We’ve already discussed the physical discomforts that accompany this state of hunger. When a person reaches the "starving" range, she feels desperate to put food in her body. At this point, she can no longer determine what foods her body craves – anything will do. This level of deprivation places your client at a very high risk of overeating. She is likely to eat whatever is available and more than her body needs.

In the center of the scale is a state called not hungry/not full. This was included because of the discovery that many overeaters assume that if they are not full, they must be hungry. It seemed difficult for them to consider that there were times when their body maintained a perfect balance.

Between "starving" and "not hungry/not full," there is a wide range of possible physiological signals. Although at first your client may say that she cannot tell the difference in her degree of hunger, over time she will begin to recognize the nuances in her hunger signals. People vary in where they prefer to respond to themselves, and this variation can occur for the same person on different days or at different times of the day. The optimal times for making a decision to eat fall into the ranges of "somewhat hungry," "hungry," or moving into "very hungry." Under these conditions, your client can begin to recognize her body's message that she needs to be fed, without the unnecessary discomfort that comes from waiting too long. She will now be in a position to discriminate the type of food her body craves.

In order to help illustrate this process to clients who are relearning about hunger and fullness, it is useful to have them imagine a glass of water that is half full. As the level goes down, this represents increasing stages of hunger. Their task is to bring the level back up to half full, or perhaps a bit higher. Eventually, the level decreases again, and the experience is repeated.

RELEARNING PHYSICAL HUNGER

Another reason your client may have difficulty identifying her hunger is because she cannot wait for a physical signal. The nature of binge and compulsive eating means that she is compelled to reach for food for a variety of non-physical reasons, and therefore she cannot wait for her body’s cues. Reassure your client that this is to be expected at this phase. Her task for now is to ask herself, when she is reaching for food, if she is physiologically hungry.
In their book *Overcoming Overeating*, Hirschmann and Munter use the term “stomach hunger” to refer to physiologically based eating and “mouth hunger” to refer to all other forms of eating. These terms are easy for clients to understand and help them begin to distinguish the different types of eating they engage in by offering a way to label the experience. Furthermore, the repeated use of the terms “stomach hunger” and “mouth hunger” by both client and therapist helps reinforce the body–food connection for the overeater.

**RESPONDING TO NON-PHYSICAL HUNGER**

Let your client know that you expect most of her eating will be for reasons other than physiological hunger at this early stage of normalizing eating. Even though you understand that this is upsetting to her, by definition, a compulsive or binge eater cannot wait until physical hunger; if she could simply begin to eat out of physiological hunger because you suggested the idea, she would not need to work on this issue in treatment. In the past, your client has reprimanded herself for overeating. Yet each time she yells at herself, she prolongs the overeating experience. While her negative self-talk takes her further away from her real problems, she creates a state of anxiety that fuels her overeating. Her continued yelling allows her to effectively translate intrapsychic issues into a belief that her eating and body are the real problems.

As you teach your client about the difference between physiological and psychological hunger, it is important to offer her another way to respond to her mouth hunger. “I’m out of control,” and “I’m fat and disgusting” can be replaced with compassionate words such as, “I’m reaching for food and I’m not physically hungry. Something must be making me uncomfortable right now and this is the best way I know to calm myself.” She might add, “I look forward to the day when I no longer need to turn to food to manage my uncomfortable feelings.” Although she will quickly return to the familiar, critical voice, over time she will come to believe that she is not inherently bad for her need to turn to food. In part, the messages that you convey to her will help her internalize a new voice that is full of compassion and free of judgment. This new way of being with herself will decrease her anxiety, and therefore the number of times she must turn to food to soothe herself.

**ENTITLEMENT**

If your client checks in with her stomach and finds that she is truly experiencing hunger, she can commend herself. “This is terrific. I’m hungry. I get to eat.” These words are novel for the compulsive or binge eater. For example, Hayley reported that she always feels guilty when she eats. Although she binges frequently, she never...
really feels entitled to eat anything at all. "If I eat three carrots, I probably should have only eaten two." While her words seem extreme, many overeaters never feel entitled to eat.

Up until now, your client has judged herself negatively for her appetite. As a dieter, she considered herself virtuous when she felt very hungry but avoided eating, thereby maintaining great control. Of course, this stance ultimately backfires for all dieters when they return to food, guaranteeing a binge to make up for the deprivation. When your client begins to experience physical hunger and she learns that the correct response is to feed herself, she has a new and reliable way of organizing her eating. As her body becomes hungry numerous times throughout the day, she will never need to wait long for the chance to go to food.
CHAPTER 5
BEING AN INTIMATE SEXUAL TEAM
DISCOVERING YOUR COUPLE SEXUAL STYLE
Two major contributions from the sex therapy field to the study and treatment of couple problems are the use of psychosexual skill exercises and the concept of a couple sexual style distinct from the general relational style. Discovering the couple sexual style has two dimensions (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2009). The first is how to balance each person’s sexual autonomy (sexual voice) with being an intimate sexual team. The second is how each couple sexual style integrates intimacy and eroticism.

The most common couple sexual styles in order of frequency are the following:

1. Complementary (mine and ours)
2. Traditional (conflict minimizing)
3. Soul mate (best friend)
4. Emotionally expressive (fun and erotic)

Each couple sexual style has its strengths and its vulnerabilities. Sexually, one size does not fit all. The emotional–behavioral challenge for the couple is to discover and choose the sexual style that fits each partner’s feelings and needs and facilitates sexual desire. Your chosen sexual style ensures that you can build and maintain a way of thinking, feeling, and initiation so that sex plays an energizing 15 percent to 20 percent role in your relationship. A mutually acceptable sexual style reinforces initiation and touching to confront and change inhibited sexual desire (ISD) and the no-sex marriage.

Determining your couple sexual style is a joint decision that breaks the traditional power struggle over intercourse. Sexual power struggles are poisonous for the couple and sexual desire. The key is to reach an emotional–attitudinal–behavioral commitment to a couple sexual style that facilitates healthy sexuality. You can discover the sexual balance and integration that best fit you. Play to the strengths of your chosen couple sexual style. However, it is also important to understand the potential vulnerabilities of your chosen couple sexual style, with a commitment to be aware of and actively monitor these potential traps.

The traditional belief was that the more intimacy and communication, the better the sex. This “common sense” approach has misled millions of couples. Although sex therapists are in favor of good communication and genuine intimacy, this is only one component of healthy sexuality. A sole focus on intimacy can actually cause ISD (Sims & Meana, 2010). Healthy couple sexuality requires finding a mutually comfortable level of intimacy; valuing nondemand pleasuring; adding erotic scenarios and techniques; and establishing positive, realistic sexual expectations.
The key is to find a mutually comfortable, functional couple sexual style that promotes desire, pleasure, eroticism, and satisfaction. The couple sexual style allows each person’s sexual voice to be heard as part of an intimate team that integrates intimacy and eroticism in a manner that promotes sexual desire and satisfaction. We will carefully examine the strengths and vulnerabilities of the four primary couple sexual styles to help you choose which one is the best fit for your relationship.

**COMPLEMENTARY COUPLE SEXUAL STYLE**

This is the most commonly chosen couple sexual style, especially among couples who attend therapy. The strength is that each person has a positive sexual voice within a securely bonded relationship. The complementary sexual style follows the therapeutic model of personal responsibility for desire, pleasure, and eroticism while being part of an intimate sexual team. Both partners value intimacy and eroticism. You are not clones of each other, but you are aware of your partner’s feelings and preferences, especially in terms of sexual initiation. A particular strength of this sexual style is “his,” “hers,” and “our” bridges to sexual desire. This style values both autonomy and being a securely bonded couple.

The prime vulnerability of the complementary couple sexual style is treating your sexual relationship with “benign neglect,” allowing sex to operate on automatic pilot. To maintain desire and satisfaction, your sexual relationship needs new inputs and continual energy. Value couple sexuality that is open to change and growth.

**TRADITIONAL COUPLE SEXUAL STYLE**

The major strength of the traditional couple sexual style is that both partners accept the traditional gender roles upon which their sexual relationship is organized. It is the man’s role to initiate intercourse with a focus on sexual frequency, while intimacy and affection are the woman’s domain. With this clarity, sex is not a source of conflict, nor does it require thought or negotiation. This style emphasizes marriage, children, family, and religion, resulting in a stable marital bond. There are many supports for your marriage, including same-gender friends who make jokes about the foibles of the opposite sex. If the traditional couple becomes nonsexual, this is accepted as normal with aging and is not a threat to the marriage, especially if the partners remain an affectionate couple.

There are two major vulnerabilities of the traditional couple sexual style. The first is that, with aging, the man’s ability to achieve predictable, autonomous erections
becomes problematic. The second vulnerability is that the woman feels her needs for attachment and affection are negated and overwhelmed by the intercourse focus. In both cases, the couple does not function as a supportive, intimate sexual team.

SOUL MATE COUPLE SEXUAL STYLE

In the past, the soul mate couple sexual style was thought to be the ideal. The key ingredients were high levels of intimacy, communication, and mutuality. These are the closest, most intimate couples. Being emotionally attached is more highly valued than sexual frequency. This couple sexual style can be highly validating. You feel accepted for who you really are and trust that your partner “has your back.”

Unfortunately, there are several vulnerabilities with the soul mate sexual style. The major issue is that the couple feels so close that sexual desire is smothered and they “de-eroticize” each other. Another vulnerability is that the overemphasis on mutuality causes low sexual frequency because sexual feelings and desires are not the same. A particular vulnerability is that soul mate couples do not recover from an extramarital affair. They stay stuck in feeling betrayed by their best friend rather than embracing the healing and recovery process. For many couples, the soul mate relational style is a good fit but the soul mate sexual style is not.

EMOTIONALLY EXPRESSIVE COUPLE SEXUAL STYLE

This is the most fun and erotic sexual style. Each partner has the freedom to set her or his own sexual rules. People envy this playful and sexually liberated couple’s fun, vibrant approach to sexuality. Major strengths include freedom from traditional sexual constraints; valuing sexual play and eroticism; freedom to set your own sexual rules and expectations; and the embrace of role-enactment arousal—including playing out erotic fantasies, using erotic videos and sex toys, and engaging in sexual role playing. In addition, the emotionally expressive sexual style is the most flexible and resilient, including the ability to recover from affairs.

The emotionally expressive sexual style has a number of potential vulnerabilities, making it the least stable couple sexual style. In essence, there is too much emotional and sexual drama, which drains intimacy and security. Resilience is a strength. However, after healing from a number of sexual fights or affairs, the couple runs out of energy. Vital, passionate sex gives way to blame and bitterness. A particular vulnerability is that when hurt, angry, or drunk, one member of the couple may say or do something very damaging to the partner and relationship. This
is the sexual equivalent of “dropping an atomic bomb.” For example, the man says, “You lied about valuing sexuality. If I had known the truth, I never would have committed to being a couple,” or the woman says, “You have the smallest penis of any man I’ve been with.”

It is crucial that the emotionally expressive sexual couple have a firm commitment that, no matter what, they do not drop the “sexual bomb.” Having clear emotional and sexual boundaries protects the couple against impulsive, destructive fights.

**DISCOVERING THE RIGHT COUPLE SEXUAL STYLE FOR YOU**

There is no “right” sexual style that fits all couples. Each couple creates a unique balance of autonomy and coupleness and develops a special blend of intimacy and eroticism. It is crucial to choose a couple sexual style that is comfortable and functional for both partners. Especially important is that the sexual style enhance strong, resilient sexual desire. If one partner advocates for the traditional sexual style and the other lobbies for the emotionally expressive sexual style, their sexual relationship will be stuck in a continual self-defeating power struggle in which no one wins and their sexual relationship loses.

Once you make an emotional commitment to your couple sexual style, play to the strengths of your chosen style. However, remain aware of potential vulnerabilities so you avoid those traps. Remember, the core concept of your couple sexual style is that desire, pleasure, and eroticism contribute 15 percent to 20 percent to relationship vitality and satisfaction.
EXERCISE:
CHOOSING YOUR COUPLE SEXUAL STYLE

Start this exercise by individually writing answers to the following questions. Be honest and specific—don’t give “socially desirable” answers or try to second-guess your partner.

1. How important is sex in your life? What do you value most about couple sexuality?

2. In terms of affectionate touch, do you prefer kissing, hugging, or holding hands?

3. Do you enjoy cuddling and sensual touch? Do you prefer mutual touching or taking turns? How important is non demand pleasuring for you and your relationship?

4. What is the meaning and value of playful touching? Do you enjoy silly nicknames for genitals and sexual activities?

5. How much do you engage in and value erotic scenarios and techniques? Do you prefer focused stimulation or multiple stimulation? Self-entrancement arousal or partner interaction arousal? Do you like to use external stimuli? Do you value erotic sexuality as a path to orgasm or do you prefer that the erotic experience flow to intercourse?

6. What is your preferred intercourse position—man on top, woman on top, side to side, or rear entry? What type of thrusting is most arousing—in and out, circular, deep inside, fast or slow? Do you enjoy multiple stimulation during intercourse?

7. Do you enjoy and value afterplay as part of your couple sexual style? Do you share a sense of bonding and satisfaction?
Next, share your responses with your partner. Where there are differences or conflicts, carefully discuss the question and clarify practical and emotional dimensions of your responses. Remember, you are not clones of each other. You want to maintain your sexual autonomy (sexual voice) and affirm your sexual desire and feelings about intimacy and eroticism. Your preferences and sensitivities are part of who you are as a sexual person and must be integrated into your couple sexual style if you are to be truly satisfied.

To discover an intimate, pleasurable, erotic, satisfying couple sexual style, you need to take personal responsibility for sexuality as well as embrace being an intimate sexual team. As you review your answers, discuss what balance between autonomy and coupleness is right for you. The soul mate couple sexual style is the most intimate, whereas the traditional couple sexual style has the clearest gender roles and is the least emotionally intimate. The emotionally expressive couple sexual style is the most flexible and allows the greatest freedom to be sexually expressive. The complementary couple sexual style is the most commonly chosen because it balances individual sexual autonomy with being a securely bonded sexual couple. When choosing your couple sexual style, with your unique modifications and characteristics, do not be politically correct. What is the best fit for you?

The second prime factor is to determine the best integration of intimacy and eroticism for you as a couple. The emotionally expressive sexual style focuses on eroticism, whereas the soul mate sexual style focuses on intimacy. The traditional sexual style divides roles by gender: Eroticism is the man’s domain, and intimacy is the woman’s domain. In the complementary sexual style, each partner values both intimacy and eroticism. Again, the personally relevant question is what is the right integration for you as individuals and as a couple. Don’t worry about what is “socially desirable.” What is important is the integration that allows you to experience strong, resilient sexual desire. Obviously, both intimacy and eroticism are valuable for sexual desire. Focus on what works for you as a couple.

Discovering the right couple sexual style is about mutuality and a positive influence process. To be an intimate sexual team, avoid power struggles or “winning the battle but losing the war.” We suggest that each partner have the ability to veto a sexual style that would be a bad fit. Even more important is to discuss the remaining sexual styles that could work for you. Then choose the couple sexual style that you feel best suits you.
PLAYING TO THE STRENGTHS OF YOUR CHOSEN COUPLE SEXUAL STYLE

Choosing your couple style is the first step; implementing this style is the more important step. Each style has its signature strengths. Divide strengths into dimensions of initiation, pleasuring, eroticism, and maintaining desire. For example, a strength of the complementary sexual style is emphasizing “his,” “hers,” and “our” bridges to desire. A strength of the soul mate style is the emphasis on affection, pleasuring, and mutuality. A strength of the emotionally expressive style is creating vital eroticism, including role enactment scenarios. A strength of the traditional sexual style is clarity about male initiation with a focus on intercourse, so conflict and negotiation about sexuality is minimized.

List the strengths of your chosen couple sexual style with a focus on initiation, pleasuring, eroticism, and maintaining sexual desire. Talk about how to implement these aspects so you can enjoy the strengths of your chosen couple sexual style.

BEING AWARE OF AND MONITORING POTENTIAL TRAPS

Each couple sexual style has vulnerabilities (traps). Your task is to be aware of these pitfalls. You owe it to yourself, your partner, and your relationship to create and maintain a healthy couple sexual style. Good intentions are not enough. You need to monitor potential traps at least twice a year so sexuality remains comfortable, pleasure oriented, vital, and satisfying.

The most common trap for the complementary sexual style is to treat sexuality as a “done deal” and not put energy, playfulness, or creativity into couple sexuality. Sexuality is not a passive activity. A strategy to keep sexuality energized and vital is to have each partner commit to developing a new sexual scenario every 6 months. This can involve a change in initiation patterns, a new bridge to sexual desire, a new lotion for pleasuring, an unpredictable erotic scenario, a different intercourse position or type of thrusting, or a lighthearted afterplay scenario.

The potential trap for the traditional sexual style is that the roles become too rigid. The man resents that he has to do it all sexually, and the woman resents that her needs for intimacy and touching always have to result in intercourse. A suggested strategy is that once every 6 months the man initiate a nondemand pleasuring date with a prohibition on intercourse and orgasm and that every 6 months the woman initiate a playful or erotic date that could lead to orgasm or transition to intercourse at her initiation. You can value traditional roles and the traditional couple sexual style while “spicing it up.”
The potential trap for the soul mate sexual style is that there is so much emphasis on intimacy and mutuality that desire is smothered and sexual frequency is low. Too much closeness, predictability, and warmth robs sexuality of playfulness and vitality. The suggested strategy is that once every 6 months each partner initiates a selfish or playful sexual scenario. The advantage of an asynchronous scenario is that it challenges the “tyranny of mutuality” and allows sexual feelings of one partner free reign. The advantage of a playful scenario is that it confronts the trap that intimacy needs to be serious and meaningful at all times. A sign of healthy sexuality is that it is open to playfulness.

The trap for the emotionally expressive sexual style is very different than those for other sexual styles. Emotionally expressive couples are strong on fun, unpredictability, vitality, and resilience. The trap is too much emotional and sexual drama. These partners wear each other out and break personal and sexual boundaries. Because of this, the emotionally expressive couple sexual style is the most volatile and insecure. The suggested strategy is that each partner make a short list (two or three items) of potential “atomic bomb” sexual issues. No matter how hurt, angry, or drunk, the partners commit to not “dropping the bomb.” The best example of a volatile situation is lying nude in bed after a negative sexual experience. An example of the “bomb” is when the man says, “You pulled a bait and switch; if I knew who you really were, I would never have married you.” Or the woman says, “If you can’t keep it up, why do you bother with sex at all?” Sexual fights bring out the most destructive emotional responses. The worst time to talk sex with your partner is in bed after a negative sexual encounter. Although this is true of all couples, it is especially dangerous for emotionally expressive couples.

The key guideline is to play to the strengths of your chosen couple sexual style and to make a clear commitment to stay away from the traps involved in the couple sexual style you’ve chosen.
CHAPTER 6
TWO PLUS TWO
COUPLES AND THEIR
COUPLE FRIENDSHIPS
BUILDING AN IDENTITY AS A COUPLE

As the couple forms, partners begin to share experiences with each other which build their identity as a unit. As the more they interact as a couple (both when alone and with others), the more the partners solidify their identity as a couple. How they tease each other in front of friends will become part of the way they are known as a couple. Their level of affection with each other will become charming as will the way they surprise each other with well-thought-out gifts. When they complete a bicycle ride for charity together, it helps their friends see them as a duo. Friends begin to “see them together.”

One outcome is that, as they form an identity as a couple, they may start to seek out friends who are also coupled. One engaged 28-year-old we interviewed told us that for her wedding, almost all of her invited peers were partners in a couple. These are the people with whom she and her fiancé are more apt to spend time. Couples want to be with others who remind them of themselves and reinforce their being a couple. This expands their circle of friends. But, consciously or unconsciously, as with this 28-year-old, they may also shut out individual friends who are not partners in couples.

Take the case of two women friends and what happens when one becomes a newlywed. If the three of them go out together, it may not be much fun for the husband as the women recount their pasts together and talk about people the husband does not know. The woman wants to keep her friendship but also wants to spend weekend evenings with her husband. Everyone has a story about being dumped by a close friend when he or she starts to date (or marries) someone and has less time available for the friendship. In this case, the couple’s friendship circle may shrink as they drop individual friends in favor of couples.

The friendship circle especially may shrink if they cannot find couples with whom they enjoy spending time. To make forming couples’ friendships more difficult, some couples may be shunned because of their choice of partner [e.g., if they are dating someone of a different race or where a large age disparity exists]. This process of “relationship marginalization” (when partners perceive their romantic relationship as a subject of disapproval) was looked at by psychologists Justin Lehmiller and Christopher Agnew who found that couples who were viewed with disapproval by their social network were less apt to survive. This makes sense as they find themselves with fewer people with whom to spend time. Another study led by Agnew reinforces this finding. In this study, he and two colleagues explored how well friends of the couple were able to predict the success of that couple’s relationship. Not surprisingly, the more the couple did together, the more likely the success of the couple.

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6 Ibid.
We found support for this in our research even among those whose marriage ended. As one divorced 61-year-old man who was married for 25 years told us, “It is important for couples to value one another’s friends and to integrate these friends into the relationship. It is helpful when the couple shares common interests. That creates an opportunity to have fun when getting together with ‘his’ friends and ‘her’ friends.” Ultimately, couples’ interactions help to solidify their togetherness in their own eyes and in the eyes of others who, in turn, reinforce that togetherness.

Even with the support of the community, happy marriages may be hard to sustain. Not only does a significant minority (close to 40%) of couples end up in divorce, but of those couples that are married there is a range of happiness. Happy marriages are characterized by shared checking accounts, communication, and spending time together. These couples enjoy each other and can talk through issues as they arise and are egalitarian in nature. These same couples are more apt to have friends in common, which would increase their opportunities to spend time together. Good marriages will breed more couple friendships than bad marriages. No one wants to hang out with an unhappy couple who fight all the time. A number of couples we interviewed who were in happy marriages specifically said they cannot stand being around couples that bicker. Unhappy couples often understand this. One divorced man who was interviewed told us that he and his former wife lost friends because they fought in front of their friends.

According to John Gottman, who was cited earlier and who has spent years in his laboratory videotaping and studying how couples get along, people can improve their marriages by communicating in a nondefensive manner, by validating their partners, and by staying calm during a disagreement. To Gottman, staying calm includes not hitting below the belt by making a nasty remark that crosses the line of acceptable arguing.

**ONCE YOU FIND FRIENDS, HOW DO YOU FIT THEM IN?**

Finding couple friends who are highly compatible and can fit into a couple’s life may be easier said than done given the different paths partners take to and with their individual friendships, with their own relationship, and with their couple friendships. Plus we have not even discussed a person’s need for time alone. In the simplest scenario, how does a newly married man in his 20s balance time with friends from college AND his old friends from high school AND his new wife AND his family of origin AND friends he and his wife have made AND his wife’s friends and family? If he weighs these competing allegiances and spends less time with his wife (without her

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1. In 2007, according to the CDC, *National Marriage and Divorce Rate Trends*, 856,000 marriages ended in divorce or annulments while 2,197,000 marriages occurred.
explicit permission), it may mean their identity as a couple is slower to develop, and this can spell trouble for their future.\textsuperscript{13}

Suppose we add to this common scenario what actually happens when this young couple finds another couple with whom to spend time. They make plans and choose a restaurant. Maybe there is a level of nervous excitement like on a first date. Then, half way through the dinner, they both experience the “Love her, find him overbearing (or boring) syndrome.” Or they experience one of its variations—the “Hate her, love him syndrome,” the “Like him but don’t talk about politics syndrome,” or the “Don’t get her started on her work syndrome.” Whatever the vagaries of this budding [now doomed] relationship, a couple may steer away from too much contact with another couple because they cannot tolerate long periods of time with one of the partners. The couple may even end up fighting about whether to use their little available time socializing with a couple when they really only like one of the partners, yet feel loyalty through a lifelong friendship with one of the partners. This is particularly vexing when the person they like in the couple is a lifelong friend whose partner they both intensely dislike. This situation is not uncommon.

When things work well, partners learn to accommodate to each other so they can spend time with both their spouse and their good friends, though the tenor of the interactions may not be wholly open and free floating. Let us offer another scenario that illustrates how many couples successfully reconcile competing demands for socialization and their time. This one is from a midlife marriage.

Sue and Mary, both in their 50s, are lifelong friends. They share a great deal about their marriages, including the ups and downs inherent in most relationships. These ups and downs include infrequent innocent flirtations with other men, occasional unhappiness with their partner as a lover or father, or disappointment with his career progression. They also talk about their disappointments about their own careers, doubts about their competence as mothers, and sticky problems with their siblings and aging parents. These are issues they do not usually talk about with the husbands when the two couples go out together. As a result, these couples’ friendship, built on the strength of the relationship between Sue and Mary, is not a friendship where all topics can be discussed between both couples. Some topics are taboo. Yet these couples still consider each other friends as a couple. The joy in getting together for these women is in spending time with a friend with whom there is a strong affinity as well as with her own partner. It is a couple friendship where not everything is discussed among the four of them. It also is a relationship where the women spend additional time together because their husbands are compatible with each other.

Before we delve deeper into our thinking about the purpose of Two Plus Two and how we came to study couples and their friendships, another variable needs to be considered—the family’s impact on the couple.

**FAMILY AND COUPLE FRIENDSHIPS**

When a couple starts to build a relationship, they often initiate a healthy and natural separation from their families of origin. The amount of separation varies widely from one couple to the next: some stay closely involved and include family members in many social activities, whereas others reduce their time with their parents or siblings. When they have children, as in Tracy and John’s case, the couple may want to be with other couples with young children because of shared life situations while still retaining their parents’ involvement for child care and possibly even financial assistance.

One couple we know spends every Sunday dinner at her parents’ house. Other siblings and grandchildren come for dinner, too, if they are available. There is no extraordinary pressure for this couple, now in their 50s, to go for dinner, but such obligations, especially when they are seen as pressure, could prevent a couple from making friends, as it would tie up one night a week. On the positive side, such visits provide emotional support and build family cohesion, both of which can bode well for the healthy development of family members.

Whereas some couples seek being with family, others avoid it. Another couple we know in their 30s and with two young children want nothing to do with his parents. He is still smarting from perceived injustices from years past and sees those injustices being potentially visited on his own children as they grow up. He is trying to separate from his parents and has the support of his wife in these actions.

In trying to understand how couples structure their time with family, friends, and each other, psychologist Catherine Stein and her colleagues, working in Ohio, interviewed 49 middle- and working-class couples between the ages of 20 and 49 and married for at least 5 years. The couples named an average of 7.7 shared family members and 1.5 shared friends. Couples with a large shared family network (as compared with couples with few shared family members or couples with separate friend networks for both spouses) were the most common. This configuration considered family as central in their everyday lives. Those couples characterized as having separate friend networks reported the highest levels of marital satisfaction, a point requiring additional consideration.14

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In our research we asked couples whether they spend a lot of time with their extended family and whether time with their family interferes with their developing friendships with other couples. We were interested in how couples balance what could be seen as competing demands on their time together as well as their time with friends. From the interviews we learn that extended families can impede friendships with other couples, though this is not a common occurrence. We also learned that some couples we interviewed viewed their parents as good role models for couple friendships, whereas others used their parents as examples of what they are trying to avoid. When thinking about forming friendships, the present and the historic push and pull of family connections must be considered.

In addition to looking at the interpersonal characteristics that can affect couple friendships, as well as such immutable factors as race, age, and sex, we need to look also at the broader social environment in which couples have been raised and in which men and women live. Popular culture is one portion of the broader social environment.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT COUPLES OVER THE YEARS FROM TV, MOVIES, AND BOOKS?

By looking at popular culture we can gauge what may have influenced some couples and what may have changed over time about how couple friendships are portrayed. TV is both a leader and a follower of current trends. Couples are not the same as they were 50, 30, or even 20 years ago. A brief look at television sitcoms offers some reflection on how couples during those years were portrayed in relation to other couples. The portrayals of characters on popular television shows have enormous social impact. TV shows were discussed the next day in school and the workplace. White couples may have wanted to be the Cleavers on Leave it to Beaver or the Nelsons on Ozzie and Harriet in the 1950s and black couples may have wanted to be the Huxtables on The Cosby Show in the 1980s.

In the early years of television, we saw the role that women played in the family. They were stay-at-home mothers whose husbands worked outside of the home. The couple in the sitcom was likely to have a close friendship with another couple. The men or the women in those couples got into “trouble” with each other, setting the comedic stage. By the 1970s, when women began to be portrayed as working outside of the home, a shift occurred where the couple’s own relationship gained ascendancy, often over the friendships between the women or the men.
In the 1950s, families sat around their television and got their first sustained look at how couples interacted with other couples—what might be shared with them, how men and women bantered with their friends around other couples, and where a couple might draw a boundary around their own relationship. As Jackie Gleason and Audrey Meadows portrayed Ralph and Alice Kramden on *The Honeymooners*, they were offering a glimpse of a working-class couple: a bus driver and an occasional secretary. The Kramdens closest couple friends, Ed and Trixie Norton, were played by Art Carney and Joyce Randolph. Here it is Ralph and Ed who often plot behind their wives’ backs and are ultimately brought into line. In contradistinction, and also in the 1950s, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz were starring in *I Love Lucy*. Vivian Vance and William Frawley portrayed Ethel and Fred Mertz, their landlords and closest couple friends. Here it is the women who are usually involved in some escapade, plotting and hiding behind the men’s backs. On those shows and in those days, men worked and women stayed home. If the woman worked, it was often at a job that paid well below the man’s wage. The takeaway message from the 1950s is that couples’ friends are vital to happiness both because of their individual friendships as well as their couple friendships. This was the last decade where this message came across so clearly.

*The Dick Van Dyke Show*, which ran from 1961 and 1966, starred Dick Van Dyke as Rob Petrie, a television writer. Laura Petrie, played by Mary Tyler Moore, does not work outside of the home. Their best couple friends are their neighbors, the Helpers, Jerry and Millie. The four occasionally socialize together. Both members of the couple join with their same-sex friend from time to time, forming a bond that signals the importance of friendships with individuals in couples. Here the couple’s own relationship, including some of the first television scenes of a couple’s bedroom, is portrayed as having closed boundaries, much more so than what was portrayed on *The Honeymooners* and *I Love Lucy*. By boundaries we mean that the Petries are a unit, pull together, and are not split apart by friendships with other people.

In the 1970s, *All in the Family*, starring Carroll O’Connor and Jean Stapleton as Archie and Edith Bunker, exploded on the social scene. Archie, presented as acerbic, racist, and beyond politically incorrect, is kept in check by Edith (whose dottiness is used to soften the underlying compassion of her message). In this series, significant women characters, such as Irene Lorenzo, a neighbor of the Bunkers, work outside of the home with Archie. Interestingly, her husband is portrayed as a househusband—a major role shift. Both the Lorenzos and the Jeffersons (an African American couple who later spun off into their own eponymous TV show) are neighbors who are “couple” friends—if Archie is capable of having friends. What is learned about couples’ friends here? Unlike the previous examples, the Bunkers are not as much on the same page
when it comes to the importance of friends; that is, Edith values them much more than Archie.

*Family Ties*, the Michael J. Fox vehicle, ran for almost the whole decade of the 1980s (and was supposedly Ronald Reagan’s favorite TV show). Both of the Keatons work outside of the home and in comparable jobs, she as an architect and he as a TV station CEO. No couple friends appear as recurring or central characters. This could be a reflection of a story line more focused on the cultural divide between Michael J. Fox’s Republican character and his parents’ Democratic characters; it could be that such a story line would have diverted attention from Fox; or it could be that, as a working mother, Elyse Keaton (portrayed by Meredith Baxter-Birney) did not have time for couple friends. As we found from our research, when couples are raising children who are past the toddler stage, they have less time for couple friends—there is too much going on.

*The Cosby Show*, which ran for 8 years until 1992, featured two parents, a doctor and a lawyer, who were successfully raising their children. Child rearing issues, not relationships with other couple friends, were the show’s focus.

In the 1990s we have the dueling top sitcoms of *Seinfeld* and *Friends*. *Seinfeld* did not have couples as central characters. *Friends* had Courtney Cox and Matthew Perry as a married couple a few years into the show, but the other cast members are not consistently coupled during most of the show’s run. Not much to look at there in terms of couple friendships with other couples. That leaves us with *The Simpsons* or *Home Improvement*. While we do not deny the cultural importance of *The Simpsons*, *Home Improvement* provides a more realistic portrayal of everyday life, though the Simpson family captures many of its features. In *Home Improvement*, a vehicle for comedian Tim Allen, no couple friends are portrayed as significant characters; the emphasis is again on the children and Allen’s individual relationships.

*Will and Grace* was popular in the first decade of the 21st century but not for portraying a couple who are partnered. Here we consider *Everybody Loves Raymond*. (*That 70s Show*, also popular, is retro and deals with the wrong decade.) Ray Romano plays Raymond Barone, a sportswriter who is married with three children. In this sitcom, it is relationships with his parents and brother that cause the comedic tension. Again, no couple friends outside of the family are given ascendancy, but we are shown how family affects a couple’s ability to hang out with friends.

A couple looking for themselves in relation to other couples would have few role models for how to carry out their friendships from the recent decades. Outside of TV,
where else do we learn about couple friendships? Movies? Older couples who we interviewed mentioned the 1969 movie Bob and Ted and Carol and Alice, the story of two couples at the cusp of the sexual revolution who push the envelope on their friendship. But surprisingly few movies, as reflected in Best Picture Oscar nominees, deal with friendships with other couples. Friendships are often depicted, but they are male-to-male friendships (e.g., Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, starring Paul Newman and Robert Redford) and female-to-female friendships (e.g., Thelma and Louise, starring Susan Sarandon and Geena Davis).

What about politics, popular culture, and literature? The Obamas hang out with friends from Chicago, but it is hard to know if those are individual friends they have maintained rather than couple friends. George and Laura Bush were not often seen with couple friends. Adam and Eve, Anthony (or Julius Caesar) and Cleopatra, Lancelot and Guinevere, Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, Liz Taylor and Richard Burton, John Lennon and Yoko Ono, Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith, Brad and Angelina— the list of famous couples goes on. But when we think about them, they are a unit without a significant other couple that immediately comes to mind as their close couple friends. (John Lennon and Paul McCartney were best buds but not after Yoko and Linda got into the mix.) These couples may have close couple friends, but they do not loom large in our consideration of their relationship or teach us what to do with our own couple friends.

We also learned about ourselves and others from literature. Many sources offer lists of the greatest books of all time but none of these (think Madame Bovary, War and Peace, Lolita, and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn) offers insight on couple friendships. Short of what we learned from television in its earliest decades, movies, literature, and political and popular couples do not offer a template for how such relationships operate.

WOMEN AND WORK—THE SHIFTING FORCES

Having offered this cultural digression, we can return now to the more serious topic of the impact of societal changes in relation to work on women’s and men’s relationships with other couples. The culture since the 1950s has dramatically shifted. Segregation of the sexes at the workplace was once common, regardless of the level of employment. If women were employed in an office, the boss was usually a man. Factory work was often segregated. If women were employed as saleswomen, the executives were often men. When Ralph and Alice and Lucy and Desi were America’s couples, women were less than 10% of the medical profession. By 2006
they comprised 28% of doctors, and half the medical students. In 1930, 2% of lawyers and judges were women. Twenty years ago, 43% of the first-year law students were women; now close to 50% of law students are women. Medicine and law, like engineering and business, were once considered male professions in the United States. Women and men were not equal in the workforce and in generating income for the home until recently. [Even with these changes, women often earn less money for the same work, including in medicine, law, and business.]

Until recently, men and women did not have a chance to socialize at work on equal footing. They tended to not interact at home on equal footing either. With more women in the workforce and greater equality, though not complete equality, has come the rise of the companionate marriage, or the marriage of equals. Partners in a companionate marriage believe roles are interchangeable and share similar views on child rearing and work. They value each other’s friendship, too. Partners are more likely to view each other as close friends than their predecessors, in part because the workplace treats men and women more equally.

What this means in terms of couple friendships is the following:

1. Women have less time to socialize with their women friends.
2. Spouses/partners are more apt to view each other as best or very close friends.
3. Socializing as a couple takes on greater importance because less time is available for the couple to be alone with each other [as two work schedules need to be juggled] and to socialize with other couples.

As a result, when the couple goes out, a friendship with another couple has gained increased importance. With this greater friendship and equality comes a new challenge of how to be friends with other couples. When couples socialize, they want to maximize time with their spouse as well as with others. Couples’ relationships may be even more important than in the past as the friendship between the partners of the couple is being balanced at the same time that the relationship with another couple is being navigated.

What has also changed over time is that, according to recent research, the number of friends individuals have is on the decline. Americans today are estimated to have 2.08 confidants as compared with 2.94 20 years ago. Even if we were looking at just men’s and women’s friendships, this fact alone would point out a significant difference in the way people live today.
Thus, when people (a man and a woman) with fundamentally different ways of interacting and little time on their hands (and fewer friends than the previous generation) try to form a friendship with two others who also have fundamentally different ways of interacting, negotiation is needed from all four members to make the friendship(s) work.

Healthy couples are good at accommodating each other, but the individuals in the couple still may not want to spend what little free time they have to socialize, trying to accommodate. Do women want to get together on a Saturday night and watch the baseball game? Do men want to go out for an intimate dinner with another couple and listen to their wives revealing more than they think they should about their children, their health, and their sex lives?

We asked couples about these friendships, and many can identify at least one, if not a number of, couple friends they have. They go to dinner, travel, watch their kids’ sporting events, and hang out with them. But question the couples more closely, and the friendship may not always be highly satisfying for both members of the couple. If free time is short, figuring out how to parcel out time with those friends as well as individual friends, children, extended family, work contacts, and time alone for just the couple may be difficult and stress-producing. Finally, if the individuals in the couple have different personality styles, how they engage with other couples and what they do when all four are together may be a source of disagreement.

TWO WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT COUPLE FRIENDSHIPS: STYLE AND INTERACTION

STYLE: SEEKERS, KEEPERS, AND NESTERS

From our research with close to 400 members of couples, both married and partnered, we have come to understand that couple friendships mean different things to different couples, and we have categorized them into three distinct groups. We wish to offer a thumbnail sketch here. The most outgoing couples we call Seekers. These couples seek other couples for social, intellectual, and emotional stimulation. Both partners enjoy the company of others. A second, and the largest group of couples, are ones we call Keepers. They tend to see couple friends as an important but not vital part of their lives. They have a significant number of friends, are close with those friends, and are not too interested in making new couple friends. A third group of couples that we see from our research are those that are not particularly interested in couple friendships. Either or both partners do not place a high value on them, and they are content to just spend time with the other partner, with their
individual friends, or with one or two close couples. They are not oriented by personality style to a great deal of socializing with other couples. We call them Nesters because, without putting any value on their behavior, they are content to be in their nest with just each other or with a small group of friends. Some Nesters found each other late in life or in a second marriage and are fiercely protective of the time they have.

As we offer these categories, we are aware that couples are comprised of individuals who bring their own style of interacting into the couple relationship as well as into their own individual friendships. Introverts may tend to be Nesters while extroverts may tend to be Seekers. Temporal or developmental shifts can cause an individual, for example, to change from being a Seeker to a Keeper or a Nester as work piles up, children are born, or a relationship deteriorates and socializing with another couple is no longer fun. The context may also shift. A person who grows up in a small town where she was well known and an extrovert may become more withdrawn or shy moving to a new metropolis with a new husband where people are familiar with him and not with her.

**INTERACTION: EMOTION SHARING AND FUN SHARING**

The other way of thinking about couple friendships is to look at what they do with each other when they get together, how they interact. We believe that couples tend to be on a continuum from emotion sharing at one end to fun sharing on the other end. When we asked couples how they defined couple friendships, many said they were friendships where they could spend time with another couple and have fun. The emphasis was on “doing something” with the other couple. A smaller number of couples we interviewed defined couple friendships as being relationships where they had close, sharing relationships and where there was a mutuality of friendship among all four partners. We consider the first group to be closer to the fun sharing end of the continuum and the second group to be closer to the emotion sharing end of the continuum.

We recognize here, as psychologists Jean-Philippe Laurenceau, Lisa Barrett, and Paula Pietromonaco point out, that considerable variation exists in how people develop and sustain intimacy and even in their need for warmth and validation from others. In studies conducted by these researchers, self-disclosure and partner’s self-disclosure were related to greater feelings of intimacy between the partners. Some couples were better at, and more interested in, self-disclosure than others. Emotion sharing couples may also be fun sharing. What we wish to illustrate here is what couples do when they are together with their couple friends.
CHAPTER 7
DEVELOPING RELAXATION SKILLS
The physical and mental symptoms of stress were outlined in Chapter 1 of *Overcoming Your Workplace Stress*. The result is that the individual remains in a state of 'high alert', being in a constantly overaroused state and unable to switch off either physically or mentally. This is where learning relaxation skills can be helpful. Mentally they can help the individual develop a calmer response towards negative, distracting or worrying thoughts and images. Physically they can help to reduce and ultimately eliminate the bodily symptoms of stress. Being relaxed means being in a 'distress free' state, so any intervention that contributes towards bringing about such a state can be said to have relaxation properties. The relationship between stress and relaxation can be conceptualized as being on a continuum. The aim of relaxation training is thus to create a state of inner wellbeing and peacefulness and bring the individual towards the relaxed end of the continuum, as shown in Figure 8.1.

There are a few possible reasons why people find it difficult to relax. The first of these is that they have been under stress for so long they have simply forgotten how to relax. The second one is that they may never have learned the skills of relaxation. Relaxation training equips them with the tools and techniques to enable them to move from the 'stressed' end towards the more 'relaxed' end of the continuum. However, being too relaxed in a work situation can also lead to problems of its own. For example, the individual may be seen as unmotivated, not working fast enough or not taking their job seriously. So it is important to reach a healthy balance. This chapter aims to teach you a range of informal, semi-formal and formal relaxation strategies to help you manage your stress more effectively.

**INFORMAL RELAXATION TECHNIQUES**

It is not advisable to be too prescriptive about what informal relaxation techniques to use, since everyone has their own unique way of relaxing. For example, one individual may enjoy reading a book, or listening to music, whereas another person may enjoy having a hot bath and a warm milky drink and then putting their feet up. Some people enjoy going to the cinema or theatre or to the local pub, or staying in to watch a good film on television. However, relaxation techniques are not only about being physically inactive. A good workout at the gym, swimming, jogging or a game of squash may be just what they need to help them relax. While physical activity may not be relaxing at the time, it is a
good stress buster and usually results in a very relaxed state after the physical exertion is over. Broadly speaking, people tend to choose activities which compensate for the stressful work environment in which they work. For example, a person who works largely in isolation from others is more likely to want to engage in social activities outside of work than someone who has extensive contact with people at work. A person who has a physically very demanding job is more likely to want to engage in restful activities outside of work than someone who has a very inactive and sedentary job. A person who has a mentally very demanding job is less likely to want to engage in mentally demanding activities and hobbies outside of work than a person who has a mentally undemanding job. Because of the hectic pace of modern working life, it is more common for people to choose informal relaxation strategies that involve slowing down rather than speeding up. Ultimately, however, the method of relaxation chosen will also depend on the specific interests and hobbies of the individual concerned and these can vary enormously. For example, one individual will find spending hours going through their stamp collection a relaxing pastime, whereas another individual might find such an activity incredibly boring or even stressful. Therefore, the important thing when choosing an informal relaxation strategy is to decide the right one for you personally.

SEMI-FORMAL RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

The introduction of informal relaxation techniques may be sufficient to help many people manage their stress more effectively. However, for some they are not and where this is the case, slightly more structured relaxation techniques may be required to help them become more relaxed. These are known as semi-formal relaxation techniques and there are numerous kinds of such techniques. Some of the most popular ones include massage, yoga and Tai Chi.

MASSAGE

Receiving a full body massage is an excellent way of getting the muscles in your body into a state of deep relaxation. As your body relaxes, so does your mind, so a massage can have beneficial effects both mentally and physically. Two of the most common types are Swedish massage and Shiatsu massage. The techniques they use are different: Swedish massage is a soothing one but Shiatsu massage manipulates the body’s pressure points. Although such forms of massage can be beneficial, the downside is that you generally have to pay for them. However, there are other inexpensive and enjoyable techniques you can use. For example, if you have a partner you can take turns in massaging each other. There are also a range of self-massage techniques that you can use and some examples of these are described below.
Releasing your shoulder tension

The shoulders can get particularly tense as a result of stress. One way of reducing tension in the shoulders is to reach one arm across the front of your body to your opposite shoulder and using a circular motion press firmly on the muscle above your shoulder blade. You need to press quite firmly but not so hard that it hurts you. Continue massaging in a circular motion for a couple of minutes and then move to the other shoulder and repeat the exercise on that one.

Soothing your scalp

Place your thumbs behind your ears and spread your fingers over the top of your head. Then move your scalp back and forth gently while making circular movements with your fingertips for 30 seconds or so.

Relaxing your eyes

Close your eyes and place your ring fingers directly under your eyebrows near the bridge of your nose. Then slowly increase the pressure for 10 seconds and then release. Repeat this exercise three or four times.

YOGA

Yoga involves learning a range of moving and stationary poses and combining these with deep breathing exercises. Perhaps one of the most enjoyable and sociable ways to learn and develop your yoga skills is to join a yoga class. Basic yoga for beginners involves learning slow, gentle movements, stretching exercises and relaxed breathing. It is important that you do not attempt some of the more strenuous forms of yoga until you have developed the right level of fitness, since you could do yourself physical damage if you are not fit enough. If you are unsure about what is best for you, check this out with a yoga instructor to ensure that you are starting at the right level for you. If you have a medical condition you may also need to check with your doctor that it is all right to do yoga exercises. It is safest to learn yoga by attending a group with a professional instructor to ensure that you get the basics right. Make sure that you learn at your own pace and do not feel tempted to try exercises that you do not feel ready to do because others are pressurizing you to do so. You should stop doing any exercise if it is painful. Once you have learned the basics, you can then practise alone or with others without necessarily having to go to the expense of attending yoga classes.
TAI CHI

Tai Chi is usually practised in groups and consists of learning a series of slow, self-paced, non-competitive and flowing body movements. These exercises require concentration, relaxed breathing and focusing attention on the here and now. Tai Chi is a safe and low impact option for people of all ages and levels of fitness. Once you have learned it, it can be practised anywhere, either on your own or with others. As with yoga it is best to learn the basic techniques from a professional instructor. If you have any health or mobility concerns, check with your doctor and instructor.

FORMAL RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Where an individual is experiencing severe and chronic stress related tension, informal and semi-formal relaxation techniques may be insufficient to break the habit and more formal relaxation techniques may be required. These may consist of physical or mental exercises, or a combination of both. Some common examples of formal relaxation techniques which have been demonstrated to be effective include deep breathing exercises, progressive muscular relaxation, meditation, mindfulness, imagery and visualization exercises. Learning the basics of these exercises is not difficult, but it takes regular practice to master the skills involved and gain maximum benefit from them. They need to be practised at least daily until the individual is able to use them effectively. It is no good trying to fit them in to a spare few minutes in your schedule. You need to set aside time to practise them once or twice daily and not to rush them. Also they are not intended simply as exercises to help you get to sleep at night. It is important to learn how to become relaxed in the fully waking state since you will get the most out of them in this way. There is no one technique that has been proven to be best for everyone, so it is important that you choose the one that suits you, your preferences and lifestyle best. Some of the most common techniques used are described below.

DEEP BREATHING EXERCISES

When people are stressed their breathing is affected. The muscular floor across the abdomen (the diaphragm) and the muscles between the ribs (intercostal muscles) become rigid and do not allow the lungs to expand freely within the rib cage, so the chest feels tight. Breathing thus becomes shallower and more rapid in order to get sufficient oxygen into the body. It is analogous to trying to inflate a balloon within the confined space of a small cage. Relaxed breathing involves learning to breathe more deeply and slowly from the abdomen rather than shallow fast breaths from the upper
7 :: DEVELOPING RELAXATION SKILLS

chest. This is known as ‘diaphragmatic’ breathing and is the starting point for many other forms of relaxation such as yoga and Tai Chi mentioned earlier. It can also be combined with other elements such as aromatherapy and relaxing music. An example of a deep breathing exercise which you can practise to help you relax is outlined below.

A DEEP BREATHING EXERCISE

1 Sit comfortably with your back straight. Check your breathing by placing one hand on your upper chest and the other on the top of your stomach. If your breathing is correct, when you breathe in, your stomach and lower ribs should move out before your chest, which should move very little. If this is not the case, you need to learn how to breathe correctly.

2 Breathe out through your mouth, pushing out as much air as possible while at the same time contracting your abdominal muscles. Try to do this in a slow and controlled way rather than a sudden exhale. One way of doing this is to imagine that you have a lighted candle 6 inches away from your mouth, that you do not want to blow out. This will ensure that you release the air from your lungs slowly.

3 Breathe in through your nose slowly counting to 3 or 4 seconds as you breathe in, taking the air right down into your lungs. Notice the hand on your abdomen moving out as your lungs expand fully. Hold the air in for 3 or 4 seconds.

4 Continue to breathe in slowly through your nose, holding the air in and then exhaling slowly through your mouth. Notice the lower abdomen rising and falling as you do this. If you are breathing correctly, the hand on your chest will move very little.

5 If you find it difficult to breathe from your abdomen while sitting up, try doing the exercises while lying on the floor.
PROGRESSIVE MUSCULAR RELAXATION

Progressive muscular relaxation training teaches the individual to develop advanced muscular skills which allow them to recognize and release even small amounts of tension. With regular practice the individual develops an intimate familiarity with what tension as well as complete relaxation feel like in different parts of the body and how to achieve deep levels of muscular relaxation. Also there is thought to be a powerful feedback loop between the muscles in the body and mental activity in the brain. It has been found that when a person’s muscles are relaxed they are also more likely to report feeling calmer mentally. There are different types of muscular relaxation techniques but the one which is most commonly used is the ‘contrast’ technique. This involves learning a series of step-by-step muscle tensing and releasing exercises in different muscles groups in the body. The aim of these exercises is to teach the individual the difference between the feeling of tension and relaxation in each group of muscles around the body. So, ultimately, with lots of practice the individual learns to be able to spot and counteract the first signs of muscular tension that accompany stress and can relax these muscles at will.

Most progressive relaxation practitioners start at the feet and work their way up to the head and follow a sequence of muscle groups as they progress through the body. Learning this skill takes practice and in order to learn relaxation techniques properly you will need to set aside about 20 minutes a day to go through the exercises. If you do not make this level of commitment on a daily basis, you are unlikely to gain benefit from the training. There is a range of CDs on the market that can help you learn the techniques which are outlined below. It is important that you do the training only when there is no immediate time pressure. For example, it is no good trying to fit it in 15 minutes before you rush off to work. This is likely to lead to skipping steps in the process or having your mind on other things rather than relaxation and ultimately experiencing the training as ineffective.

Once you have decided on the best time of day to do the relaxation training, prepare yourself by creating the right environment. Start by finding a room which is quiet and where you are unlikely to be disturbed. If necessary, inform others in the house that you are doing the exercises and do not wish to be disturbed. You do not want the distraction of someone walking into the room to get something or telling you there is a telephone call for you halfway through the exercises. Also, make sure that the room is not too hot or too cold and the lighting is dimmed if possible. You may need to close the curtains if it is too bright. Make yourself comfortable by either lying on a bed or sitting in a comfortable armchair. Loosen any tight clothing such as a belt, tie or the
top button of a shirt. Take off your shoes and get yourself comfortable. Take a few minutes to concentrate on your breathing using the breathing exercises described earlier. Once you are breathing in and out in slow deep breaths, you are ready to start the progressive muscular relaxation routine outlined below.

A PROGRESSIVE MUSCULAR RELAXATION EXERCISE

1. Focus your attention to your right foot, squeezing it as tightly as possible to the count of ten.

2. Relax your right foot. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation in the muscles of your right foot. Enjoy the feeling of your foot loosening up and the feeling of warmth as the blood returns to the muscles in the foot. Wiggle your toes around gently and notice the cooler air circulating around them.

3. Stay in this relaxed state for a moment, breathing deeply and slowly.

4. Shift your attention to the left foot and repeat the exercise.

5. Stay in this relaxed state for a moment, breathing deeply and slowly.

6. Move slowly up through your body contracting and relaxing the muscle groups as you go – right calf, left calf, right thigh, left thigh, hips and buttocks, stomach, chest, back, right arm and hand, left arm and hand, neck, shoulders, face, eyes and head.

7. Periodically return to your breathing to ensure that you are breathing slow, deep breaths.

8. Once you have gone through the full routine, spend a few minutes simply enjoying the relaxed state that you are in before returning to your everyday tasks.

9. Repeat this exercise daily until you feel that you have fully mastered the techniques involved.

10. If you notice that the tension is worse in particular muscle groups in the body, tailor the exercise routine to spend extra time on these muscle groups and less on those where it is not such a problem.

11. Once you have learned and are comfortable with the relaxation exercises, you can then begin to use them to combat stress in real life situations, for example when you are stuck in your car in a traffic jam or during your coffee break at work.
A BRIEF RELAXATION EXERCISE FOR THE NECK AND SHOULDERS

For many people who are stressed, muscular tension is most severe in the neck and shoulder muscles. Below is a relaxation exercise which takes very little time to do and specifically focuses on the neck and shoulders. It consists of exercises aimed at adopting the correct posture, relaxing the shoulders and relaxing the neck muscles.

1. Find the correct sitting position: stand up straight with your arms at your sides about six inches in front of a chair. Move the left leg back so that the back of the knee touches the chair. In one swift movement stick your bottom out and sit back in the chair. Allow yourself to slide into position in the chair with both feet flat on the ground and your back straight.

2. Neck rotation: sitting in an upright position looking straight ahead of you, slowly rotate your head to the left until your chin is parallel to your left shoulder. Hold your head there to the count of ten before slowly returning your head to look straight ahead of you. Repeat the exercise, moving your head to the right. Go through the full routine a few times.

3. Neck elongation: imagine that you are a puppet with a string attached to the top of your head and someone is pulling the string upwards. You will experience an ‘elongation’ feeling in the vertebrae (bones) of the spine in your neck. Do not resist this but simply allow it to happen for a count of ten. Then relax and notice a ‘sinking’ feeling as you relax. Repeat the exercise again after a 30 second gap. When repeated, the action should feel like there is a ‘spring’ in your neck.

4. Shoulder exercises: slowly and gently hunch your shoulders up tightly and move them upwards as if you are trying to touch your ears with them. Hold the position for the count of ten and then relax your shoulders. Repeat the exercise a couple of times.

Note: do not do the neck and shoulder exercises more than three times in one session but do them regularly, especially when you are feeling tension in your neck.
MENTAL RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

So far in this chapter the relaxation exercises described have focused on physical relaxation. However, there are a range of mental relaxation exercises that have also been demonstrated to be effective in reducing stress. Generally speaking they work by reducing the ‘mental chatter’ that people who are stressed are bombarded with on a daily basis and inducing an inner sense of calm and peacefulness. Some of the best-known techniques include meditation, mindfulness, mental refocusing and visual imagery and these are outlined below.

Meditation

Meditation is often equated with Eastern mysticism and something that The Beatles did in the 1960s while on drugs. However, there is nothing intrinsically mysterious about meditation. It is simply a set of techniques aimed at helping the individual relax mentally. There is a wide range of meditative techniques but generally they involve sitting in a quiet comfortable environment, doing some preliminary muscle relaxation and breathing exercises to ensure a physically relaxed state and then practising a mental exercise which induces a passive attitude to the internal mental activity and external distractions that are being experienced. Meditation uses a ‘neutral’ focal device to engage the attention of the individual, such as a mental image (picture) or a ‘mantra’ (a chant or repeating a word or number over and over again). Focusing one’s attention on to the neutral focal device allows all other information to drift in and out of the individual’s consciousness without paying much attention to it at all. One example of a focal device is to imagine a translucent blue pyramid shape floating in three-dimensional space. Another is to imagine the word ‘RELAX’ in large bold three-dimensional letters revolving slowly in three-dimensional space. In some ways these examples are comparable to a screen saver on a computer, in that the image moves or rotates slowly on the screen while all other programs are shut down. An example of a mantra would be to the sound ‘Ommh’ over and over again. The result of paying attention to a neutral focusing device is to induce an inner sense or peacefulness and calm.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a particular kind of meditation derived from the Buddhist philosophy. It is based on the observation that when we are in a tense or distressed state, our mind is usually somewhere other than the present moment in time. For example, anxious people tend to live in the future. They spend much of their time worrying about what might happen tomorrow, next week or some time in the future. They
predict that disaster and catastrophe are just round the corner. Depressed people on the other hand spend much of their time focusing on the past, missed opportunities and losses. Mindfulness meditation techniques, however, involve teaching the individual how to be fully engaged in the present moment without excessively analysing or over-thinking the experience. So rather than worrying about the future, or dwelling on the past, mindfulness meditation switches the focus of attention to what is happening in the here and now. There is a range of techniques that can bring about a state of mindfulness and some examples of these are outlined below. Give them a try and see what it feels like.

MINDFUL EATING

How often do you sit there at work eating your lunch while your mind is elsewhere? You may be worrying about the meeting that you have to go to later that afternoon, or you may be focusing on the memory of some event that has happened in the past. Because your attention is elsewhere it is likely that you have not even noticed the taste, touch or texture of the food that you are placing in your mouth. You may even be gulping the food down because you are in a hurry. Mindful eating involves paying full attention to the meal that you are eating. Try to eat slowly, taking time to fully enjoy the tastes, smells, colour and textures of the foods you are eating. Notice what it feels like when you chew and swallow each bite of your food.

BODY SCAN

In some respects body scanning is similar to progressive muscular relaxation in that you focus your attention on various parts of your body, starting with your feet and then working your way up the body. However, it is different from progressive muscular relaxation in that in mindfulness you are simply noticing ‘what is’ rather than tensing and relaxing your muscles, or labelling sensations as good and bad. It is about observing all the sensations you are experiencing in your body without trying to change anything. For example, you may observe that the muscles in your neck are particularly tense but instead of trying to change the sensation, mindfulness is about accepting that this is the way your neck is feeling at the present moment in the here and now.

MINDFUL WALKING

As with eating, how often do we simply rush from one place to another with our mind somewhere else? Mindful walking involves focusing your attention on the physical experience of every step that you take. Notice the sensation of pressure on your feet
and in your shoes as your feet touch the ground. Experience the changes when you walk on different kinds of surface. Observe your body movements and sensations in your muscles. Notice the rhythm of your breathing and the feeling of the wind, rain or sunshine against your face. Soak up the sounds, sights and smells impinging on your senses as you progress on your journey.

Mental refocusing

Research has shown that humans have quite a limited attention span. It amounts on average to approximately seven ‘bits’ of information. So, for example, if we are asked to remember a series of digits in a telephone number, the average person can usually remember seven. Some people can remember one or two more than this and others fewer, but on average it is seven. This is important since although we are constantly being bombarded by hundreds of bits of information from all sensory modalities (sight, sound, taste, touch and smell), we can selectively and consciously pay attention to only a small number of them. The ones that we select are those which we perceive to be most important or relevant to us and the rest are processed unconsciously and go by unnoticed. To illustrate an example of selective attention, imagine that you are at a party and deep in conversation with someone. You are so engrossed that you do not notice what else is going on around you. However, you suddenly hear your name mentioned in a conversation nearby and immediately you switch your attention to that conversation. Why and how can this happen? It happens because your brain is geared up to selectively pay attention to those bits of information that are most relevant and important to you. However, your brain must have been unconsciously processing lots of other incoming information in order to be able to switch attention in this way. When people are under stress they are hypervigilant to incoming information that signals threat or danger and get into the habit of focusing most (if not all) their conscious attention span to such stimuli. Mental refocusing techniques can be used to train the individual to shift their focus of attention away from the distressing stimuli to neutral or positive ones. One example of mental refocusing is the attention shift exercise. For example, some people experiencing stress may show an attention bias towards internal bodily sensations and symptoms rather than stimuli in their external environment. The purpose of attention training in this context would thus be to shift attention away from focusing on the self towards external, more neutral environmental cues. This change of focus can ultimately result in a reduction in stress in that individual. Exercises can also focus on shifting attention between the five sensory modalities (i.e., sight, sound, smell, taste and touch), or between tasks within a particular sensory modality. To illustrate this you can try the little experiment below for yourself.
A MENTAL REFOCUSING EXERCISE

Begin by focusing your attention on the ticking of the clock in your room. Before being instructed to do this, you may not have even noticed that the clock was ticking. It does not have to be a clock since any sound source will suffice for this experiment. You will notice that once you pay attention to the sound, it seems to get louder. Do this for a couple of minutes before switching your attention to another sound in the room such as the hum of the refrigerator, the fluorescent light or the boiler. While you are paying attention to the second sound source, you will no longer be able to listen to the first one (i.e., the clock). Do this for a couple of minutes. Now notice the sounds coming from outside of the room such as people talking, cars passing by or perhaps the sound of an ambulance siren in the distance? And pay attention to one of these. If you practise these attention training exercises regularly over a period of time, you will become more skilled at shifting your attention. Research has found that attention training can be effective in reducing stress if practised at least twice a day over a period of six months.

Visual imagery

Visual imagery (sometimes called visualization or guided imagery) is a variation on traditional meditation that can have powerful relaxation properties. It involves imagining a scene which makes you feel at peace. You can choose whatever scene you wish. This might be a favourite place from your childhood, an image from a relaxing holiday that you once had, or even a picture by your favourite artist. The main point of the exercise is to find an image, scene or setting which is the most calming to you. You can do the imagery exercise with a therapist, on your own, or with the use of an audio recording. There are lots of CDs on the market which can be used for this purpose. For example, the ‘rose garden’ takes you in your imagination through a beautiful garden of roses and asks you to savour the experience through all your sensory modalities. Another one is called the ‘enchanted forest’, which takes you on a magical journey through a very beautiful and peaceful forest. Others create the sounds that you might hear while lying on a beach, for example including the gentle lapping of the waves on the shore or the sound of seagulls flying above you, and ask you to relax in the presence of these sounds.

The important thing about doing imagery successfully is that you imagine a setting that is most relaxing for you personally. To gain maximum benefit from an imagery exercise, you need first of all to do it somewhere comfortable and when you are not in any hurry and unlikely to be disturbed. Start by closing your eyes and clearing your
mind of any mental chatter. Focus on deep breathing for a few minutes before commencing the imagery exercise that you have chosen. Picture the images as vividly as you possibly can in all the sensory modalities. Imagine in great detail the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touch of the setting you have placed yourself in. You could try the following exercise.

**A VISUAL IMAGERY EXERCISE**

Imagine you have chosen the setting of a Christmas Eve long ago in your childhood at a time when you felt happy, safe and secure. Try to imagine the room you are in, the lighting of the room, the patterns on the wallpaper, the pictures on the wall, the colour schemes, who is there with you, where you are in the room, the way in which the Christmas tree has been decorated, the smell of cooking from the kitchen, the smell of the freshly cut pine tree, the sounds of excited children and Christmas carols coming from the radio, the feeling of warmth on your face from the roaring log fire, the texture of your brand new dressing gown, the taste and sensation of eating a warm mince pie, the reflections from the fire light on the wall and the sight of snowflakes gently fluttering past the window.

This example may of course be a very romantic version of your actual childhood experiences of Christmas Eve. However, it does not really matter if the scene that you imagine is a real memory of a time in the past when you have felt particularly happy and safe, or a product of your imagination. The main thing is that it is a restful image and creates a sense of peace and mental wellbeing in you.
SUMMARY AND MAIN LEARNING POINTS

- Stress and relaxation can be conceptualized as being at opposite ends of a continuum.
- Individuals who are experiencing stress either have forgotten how to relax or may have never learned the art of relaxation in the first place.
- There is a range of practical tools and techniques that can help the individual move from the stressed to the relaxed end of the continuum.
- The interventions described in this chapter are at three levels, namely informal, semi-formal and formal relaxation skills.
- For many people informal relaxation strategies are all that are needed to help them manage their stress effectively.
- It is not possible to be too prescriptive with respect to which informal relaxation techniques are best for you personally, since everyone has their own different way of relaxing informally.
- Examples of some of the most popular informal relaxation strategies include reading, listening to music, having a hot bath, going to the cinema, theatre or pub, or watching television. Alternatively, some people prefer to use a physical activity such as swimming, jogging, squash or a vigorous workout at the gym.
- The important thing when choosing an informal relaxation strategy is to decide which one is the right one for you.
- Where informal relaxation strategies are insufficient to help an individual cope with their stress, then semi-formal relaxation techniques may be required.
- Semi-formal interventions consist of slightly more structured relaxation techniques than informal relaxation strategies.
- There are numerous kinds of semi-formal relaxation techniques and some of the most popular ones include massage, yoga and Tai Chi.
- Where an individual is experiencing more chronic stress-related tension, informal and semi-formal relaxation techniques are insufficient to break the habit and more formal relaxation techniques may be required.
- Formal relaxation may consist of physical or mental exercises, or a combination of both.
- Some common examples of formal physical relaxation techniques which have been demonstrated to have beneficial effects include deep breathing and progressive muscular relaxation exercises.
Some common examples of formal mental relaxation techniques which have been demonstrated to have beneficial effects include meditation, mindfulness and visual imagery exercises.

Deep breathing is of key importance in terms of relaxing and is the starting point for many forms of physical and mental relaxation including progressive muscular relaxation, yoga, Tai Chi and meditation.

Learning the basics of these more formal physical and mental exercises is not difficult but it takes regular practice to master the skills involved and gain maximum benefit from them.

Relaxation exercises need to be practised at least daily and preferably more frequently than this until the individual is able to use them effectively.

In conclusion, there is no one technique or level of intervention that has been proven to be best for everyone, so it is important that you choose the technique and level that most appropriately meets your needs, preferences and lifestyle. Once you have decided on the intervention which is best for you, you need to practise it at least daily. Practice is essential when learning a new skill and without it, it is unlikely that you will gain maximum benefit. If in doubt about what is the best level to start, it is preferable to begin with informal interventions, since often these are sufficient to produce the desired effect. It is only if you find the informal techniques to be ineffective that you will need to progress on to the more formal level of interventions as outlined earlier in this chapter. If you are unsure about what interventions to start with, try experimenting with some informal interventions that you think might work for you. If they have the desired effect, that is great. However, you may not get it right first time and it is important that you do not give up at the first hurdle. Treat it as an experiment in which you may try a number of interventions before you find the right one for you. Once you have started putting the relaxation techniques you have learned into practice, you should experience a reduction in your stress levels and a corresponding increase in the feeling of relaxation over time as you move to the more relaxed end of the continuum.
CHAPTER 8
THE BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGY OF HAPPINESS
In Buddhism happiness (more accurately understood as *well-being*) is thought to be a natural outcome of wise understanding, compassionate action and ethical conduct. The psychologist Thomas Bien sums up Buddhism’s recipe for happiness in this pithy remark, “Happiness is being mindful” (2010). In this case, ‘being mindful’ is a virtuous dedication to developing the wakeful, compassionate presence that lies at the heart of genuine mental and emotional health.

Mindful engagement with wisdom and virtue endows us with the capacity to know which forms of happiness are and are not conducive to suffering. “It’s our nature to want happiness and not want suffering, and thus Buddhists do not ask that one give up the pursuit of happiness but merely suggest that one become more intelligent about how it is pursued” (Hopkins, 2008).

Self-lessness (P: *anattā* S: *anātman*) and non-violence (S: *ahimsā*) are central to the intelligent pursuit of happiness. When one knows what intentions and actions facilitate an aliveness that is non-harming, the joy of being in the world is always available irrespective of causes and conditions. The Buddha offered two schemas for actualizing the well-being of non-harming and self-lessness in daily life.

The primary method, *The Eightfold Path*, is elaborated in the *Fourth Noble Truth*, “And this is the path: the path with eight branches: right vision, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration” (Batchelor, 2010).

*The Eightfold Path* can be divided into three categories of practice—wise knowing, *samādhi* and ethical conduct, each offering its own particular type of well-being. Meditative equipoise develops serenity and wise insight—the causes of liberation. Ethical conduct is the conduit through which liberative wisdom actualizes itself in daily life. The message is: *until you are fully awakened, mindfully endeavor to act in each moment with an aspiration to achieve the very awakening you seek.*

The second Buddhist framework involves ongoing cultivation of the Perfections (P: *pāramī* S: *pāramīta*), or complete virtuous action. Theravada Buddhism prescribes 10 *pāramīs*: generosity (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), renunciation (*nekkhamma*), transcendent wisdom (*pannā*), energy/zeal (*viriya*), patience (*khanti*), truthfulness (*sacca*), determination (*adhitthāna*), lovingkindness (*mettā*) and equanimity (*upekkha*). Mahāyāna Buddhism stipulates 6 *pāramītas*: generosity (*dāna*), virtue (*śīla*), patience (*ksānti*), energy/zeal (*vīrya*), one-pointed concentration (*dhyāna*) and transcendent wisdom (*prajñā*).
TWO KINDS OF HAPPINESS

A person cannot have happiness unless they have some space, some freedom inside them. [Hahn, 2013]

Because of the rise in popularity of positive psychology, research on happiness has increased exponentially. Until recently this research primarily measured life satisfaction, largely attributed to positive feelings about favorable circumstances. But studies increasingly show that conditional happiness turns out to be a poor indicator of inner well-being. Wealthier individuals report reduced levels of happiness derived from their wealth and impaired capacity to savor positive everyday experiences.1 Furthermore, although increases in income up to $75,000 correlate to similar gains in emotional well-being and life satisfaction, no additional increases in emotional well-being occur above that amount.2 It seems that more money does not necessarily equal more inner contentment.

Social science has differentiated happiness into two modes: (1) fluctuating, hedonic happiness3 — the transient joy or relief derived from self-motivated seeking of pleasure and avoiding of displeasure; and (2) sustainable, authentic happiness4 — a eudaimonic, resilient, non-egoic inner well-being resulting from inner development of wisdom (prajñā), compassion (karunā) and virtue (śīla).

When people say, “I just want to be happy,” I believe they seek authentic happiness but may not know how to achieve it. Consumerism, materialism and fame-ism enslave us in a seemingly inescapable happiness trap of discomfort relief, pleasure seeking and maniacal becoming. Unaware of our captivity, we remain oblivious to the psyche’s fixation on insufficiency and the painful pointlessness of incessant wanting.

Buddhism—with its insistence on the three trainings—wholeheartedly endorses renouncing self-centered, hedonic happiness for the self-less path of authentic human flourishing.

If by giving up a lesser happiness [fluctuating, hedonic happiness] One could experience greater happiness [sustainable, authentic happiness], A wise person would renounce the lesser to behold the greater. The Buddha, Dhammapada 215

Craving for the lesser happiness is sustained by the psyche’s persistent denial of temporality and its false belief in certainty. No matter how painful the inevitable loss of favorable circumstances, a deluded psyche will still cling to false hope: ‘next time it/they will be different, or it/they will work, or it/they won’t end/leave.’ Swinging...

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between hope and fear the psyche remains fixated and captive in endless rounds of samsāra.

Buddhism’s greater happiness is eudaimonic and results from embodying the practical wisdom of the three trainings. This inspires us to act wisely and virtuously with compassion, respect and regard for all beings. The greater happiness manifests in daily life as virtuous human flourishing.

PERSONAL EXPLORATION OF LESSER AND GREATER HAPPINESS

Exploring what makes us truly happy can be exciting and distressing. Realizing how much of what we think makes us happy actually leads to unsatisfactoriness can be frustrating. In the first part of the exercise, I urge you to be honest and kind. Non-judgmentality is your best friend. In the second part, focus on what you consider virtuous action. Again be honest and seek change that is doable. Over time small changes turn into big transformations.

Part 1

List your primary sources of happiness: family, intimate relationships, friends, work, service, hobbies, spiritual activities, leisure activities, community or political interests. Don’t be afraid to list negative sources of pleasure like self-centeredness, irresponsibility, untruthfulness, addictions, infidelities, laziness, procrastination and so on. We do get something from the destructive habits we claim to dislike. Check the category of happiness it falls under. Contemplate and document what forms of suffering arise from it. Sources of greater happiness may have downsides and challenges too.

TABLE 7.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of happiness</th>
<th>Lesser</th>
<th>Greater</th>
<th>What kinds of suffering arise from this source?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Part 2

Consider your current sources of happiness and the amount of suffering they contribute to your daily life. Now look at the following list of pāramīs (commendable virtues that cultivate authentic happiness): generosity, morality, renunciation, meditation/wisdom, energy, patience, truthfulness, determination, restraint, lovingkindness and equanimity. Take some time to really sit with each of these virtuous qualities. Consider which virtues would generally increase feelings of
well-being in your daily life. How might dedication to its practice specifically transform current positive sources of lesser happiness or replace destructive sources of hedonic happiness? Use the table below to document your chosen Pāramīs, the way in which they would increase well-being and a practice plan for their implementation in your daily life.

TABLE 7.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pāramī</th>
<th>What well-being would arise from it?</th>
<th>How will I practice this pārami in daily life?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
CHAPTER 9

BEFRIENDING YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGES (EXERCISE)
Let's begin with some sage advice from Dr. Judson Brewer, "You're already awesome. Just get out of your own way!" (2013). In other words, get doubting, comparing mentation out of your way.

I am a big fan of faith and encourage everyone to generate faith in their inborn capacities to beat the odds. The potential to develop everything you need to meet any challenge already resides within you, and the Dharma is the supreme vehicle for nurturing that potential. The Eightfold Path and/or lojong mind training help us internally unite around moral principles, which promote right seeing, right action and right mindfulness, under all conditions—especially in challenging situations.

I imagine every mental health clinician has faced the difficulty of working with someone who is averse to or ambivalent toward challenge. Avoidance and resistance are common first responses to challenge in those who suffer from freeze physiology, depression and anxiety. Conversely, lashing out or spiraling out is a common reaction for those overwhelmed by anger, impulses or emotion dysregulation. The failure to thrive can often be rooted in existential fear of one's power and a resulting loss of will.

To encourage self-empowerment and lessen cognitive-affective resistance and fearfulness, I recommend breaking challenges down into digestible parts by examining motivation, intention, values and commitment. Doing so clarifies objectives and increases determination or ‘guts’—sometimes referred to as ‘fearlessness’ by my Buddhist teachers. Contemplating these four attributes reimagines purpose, stimulates personal investment and steers skillful execution and achievement. This method is especially useful when successfully meeting a challenge necessitates acquiring new skills or greater resources or enduring difficult conditions.

The following exercise will help you analyze a current challenge and create a plan to meet it successfully by exploring motivation, intention, values and commitment. When commitment falters or doubts arise, reconnecting with motivation, intention and values will promote determination and follow-through. As you successfully work with this particular challenge, remain open to new challenges or the realization that what you thought was hard did not turn out to be very challenging in the end. Consider carefully any hopes and fears that may have distorted your perception of what you are capable of achieving, and let them go. Use this process to practice meeting life’s challenges with greater courage, humility and, of course, awakened presence.
9 :: BEFRIENDING YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGES
(EXERCISE)

CHOOSE A CURRENT LIFE CHALLENGE.

Motivation

What motivates you to meet and master this challenge?

What skills, knowledge and resources do you already possess that will help you?

What skills, knowledge and resources do you need to accumulate?

Take some time to consider the following questions:

How would meeting this challenge impact your sense of purpose or meaning?

How would surmounting this challenge transform the way you show up in the world?

How would mastering this challenge alter the way you feel about yourself?
9 :: BEFRIENDING YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGES (EXERCISE)

*Intention*

What intention will inspire the courage to meet this challenge?

What intention will reconnect and reinvigorate motivation?

What intention will inspire you to persevere in times of difficulty, fearfulness or doubt?

What is your intended outcome?
What compromises are you willing to make to ensure a mutually beneficial outcome?

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

What is non-negotiable?

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

Values and Virtues

What values and virtues are important to embody as you meet this challenge?

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

What values and virtues will help you cultivate resilience, creativity and the ability to successfully meet obstacles along the way?

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________
9 :: BEFRIENDING YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGES
(EXERCISE)

How will meeting this challenge contribute to the well-being of others?

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Commitments

Get started with small steps to meet this challenge to build confidence in your abilities:

Choose one easily achievable goal:

_________________________________ and have it accomplished in ________ days.

Investigate a more challenging goal:

_________________________________ and have that accomplished in_________ days.

What allies and resources can you commit to gathering in the next ________
days/weeks?

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Pick an activity for developing one of these resources and do it in the next ________
days/weeks.

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On a scale of 1-10 (1=not confident at all, 10=totally confident), how confident were you
before this exercise in your ability to face this challenge?_______ And now? ________