

AMERICAN JUDGES ASSOCIATION
2015 MIDYEAR MEETING

Stress Management: Empirically-Based Techniques for Judges



American Judges Association

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Unique stresses for judiciary:

- It has been reported that the number one stressor for judges is isolation:
- What are your biggest individual stressors?
- What stress relievers work best for you?
- What are the most problematic stress relievers you have attempted?





- How does one deal with evil, difficult & even dangerous people without suffering ill effects or deleterious impact, or even becoming like them?
- As a judge, how does one solve problems when the system within which one functions limits solutions?

- How does a judge maintain persistent optimism in the face of what could feel like insurmountable barriers, frustrations & limitations?
- What are the insights Judge Starnes has developed, particularly now that he has become somewhat removed in terms of no longer operating from the constraints in full time work as judge?





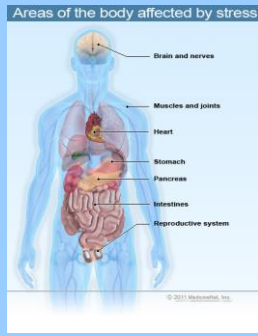
How do forward thinking individuals limit discouragement? How best to respond, particularly when simple changes could improve the system, yet are blocked by frustrating forces: decision-makers at the top limiting options, limited thinking of those on the court-related team, physics-bodies at rest tend to stay at rest, fear of change, political influence, adverse uninformed publicity, etc.



General Concepts -What happens when we are stressed?

- Stress is what you feel when you have to handle more than you are used to managing.
- The stress equation: stress = load ÷ capacity.
- The key is balancing the stress load with our ability to manage it.

- When we are stressed, our bodies respond as though we are in danger.
- The body releases hormones that speed up the heart, make us breathe faster & give us a burst of energy.
- This is called the fight-or-flight stress response.





Some stress is normal & even useful. Stress can help if we need to work hard or to react quickly. For example, stress can win a race or finish an important job on time.



However, persistent stress causes fatigue & breakdown.



"You need to go home, take a long relaxing bath surrounded by aromatic candles and do an hour of yoga; but that's out of the question. How about a five minute smoking break?"

What is the impact of protracted, chronic stress?



Unrelenting stress can have bad effects:

- Headaches
- upset stomach
- back pain
- trouble sleeping





Unrelenting stress can have bad effects:

- weakened immune system, making it harder to fight off disease
- pre-existing health problems can intensify
- adverse impact to mental health—moodiness, increased tension, or depressive symptoms
- relationships may suffer
- work satisfaction, performance & efficiency declines



What can you do about stress?

A lot! Research verifies we can learn to manage stress.

To manage stress:

- Find out what is causing stress in your life.
- Look for ways to reduce the level of stress in your life.
- Learn healthy ways to relieve stress & reduce its harmful effects.



The Holmes Rahe Life Stress Inventory
The Life Stress Inventory Rating Scale

DIRECTIONS: Mark down the *greater* value of each of these life events that has happened to you during the *previous year*. (Indicate any exceptional events.)

Life Event	Value
1. Death of spouse	100
2. Divorce	73
3. Marital separation from spouse	63
4. Death of a close family member	63
5. Moving (personal or family)	53
6. Change of schools	39
7. Death of a close friend	37
8. Personal or family illness	36
9. Change of living conditions	31
10. Change of schools	29
11. Change of family member (i.e., birth, adoption, older adult moving in, etc.)	29
12. Major change in financial status (i.e., lost salary or bonus or other loss)	29
13. Change of a close friend	27
14. Change in a close family member	27
15. Major change in the number of arguments/arguments (i.e., either a 50% increase or a 50% decrease)	26
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Notes: Add up all the points you have to find your score.

100-150: Low stress reaction for most of the year with low susceptibility to stress-related health problems.

150-200: Moderate stress reaction for most of the year with moderate susceptibility to stress-related health problems.

200-250: High stress reaction for most of the year with high susceptibility to stress-related health problems.

250-300: Very high stress reaction for most of the year with very high susceptibility to stress-related health problems.

How do you measure your stress level?

- Sometimes it is clear where stress is coming from—major life changes: the death of a loved one, getting married, or having a baby.
- But other times it may not be so clear why you feel stressed.
- The Holmes & Rahe Stress scale increases self-awareness of stressors.

- It is vital to determine what causes stress for you.
- How stress is perceived & experienced differs between individuals.
- Tracking stress can be helpful. Use a notebook: write down when something makes you feel stressed, how you reacted & what you did to deal with the stress.
- Strategic analysis will assist in tailoring your efforts to improve outcomes.



How can you avoid stress?



Stress is a fact of life for most people. You may not be able to get rid of stress, but you can look for ways to lower it.

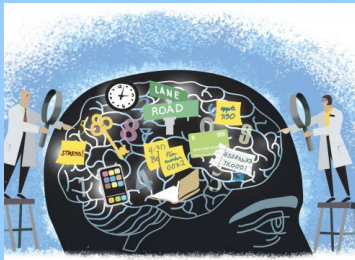
Reducing Stress:

Learn better ways to manage your time:

- Scheduling maximizes work efficiency.
- Do the most important tasks first & stress is maximally lessened.
- Avoiding a large task? Understand the dynamic of procrastination.
- Short term experience of stress reduction actually produces long-term, chronic & intensified stress.



Find better ways to cope.



- Analyze how you have been dealing with stress.
- Be honest about what works & what does not.
- Contemplate other options that might work better.



Take good care of yourself.

- Get plenty of rest-restorative sleep is vital to stress management.
- Don't smoke.
- Limit alcohol-Caveat: short-term benefits of alcohol produce experience of diminished stress & increased perception of euphoria. Protracted overuse of alcohol produces habituation. With more alcohol, we might feel better but we do not think better.



Eat well:



- With maturity this is even more important. The brain increasingly produces less neurochemicals which facilitate synaptic communication.
- Consider research-supported nutritional support, including supplements & spices to enhance neurochemical functioning.
- Thinking clearly & working efficiently represent powerful stress relievers.

Try new ways of thinking:

- Cognitive behavioral approaches are empirically supported to powerfully address stress.
- Find yourself starting to worry? Implement thought stopping techniques. Write down your worries & let go of things you cannot change.
- Learn to say "no."
- Speak up. Expressing needs & concerns reduces stress & lessens negative feelings. Assertive statements support thoughtful, tactful communication.





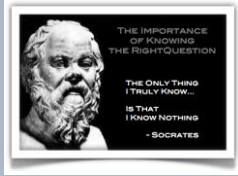
Ask for help. People with a strong network of family & friends manage stress better. Much is learned from "tethered monkeys" studies.



- Tap into your resources, such as this judge's conference.
- Frank discussions are stress relieving, especially with those who comprehend your life & have developed ameliorative strategies pertinent to your purposes.
- Develop a structure to promote peer coaching & provide a sounding board.

Ongoing process of mutual support through American Judges Association website:

- group discussions in person & on the telephone
- e-mail communication, videoconferencing
- dyadic support
- Socratic approach utilizing inquiry & applying a mental checklist, facilitates comprehension of complex matters & promotes problem-solving when addressing onerous decisions.





Share the load-tap into professionals in your community.

They will be eager to share their expertise with problems requiring expert knowledge.

Establish communication with individuals like professors with research teams, or leaders of professional groups with focused expertise to answer questions pertaining to your work.

College students research your questions, such as studying a court system & offering results to guide decision-making about potential improvements.

Consider ideas outside your professional expertise, gaining new perspectives from different vantage points. The business community offers innovative ways to enhance efficiency & promote constructive problem-solving.



How can you relieve stress?

Each person relieves stress in their own way. Experiment to see what works best for you:

- Regular exercise is one of the best ways to manage stress. Walking can get you started. Have you heard about power plate? In about 20 minutes' time you can achieve exercise benefits of 2 hours.
- Writing about concerns can help.





- Express feelings - Talk, laugh, cry, & express anger when you need to with someone you trust.
- A quick detoxifying from stress involves: take 10 deep, slow breaths & drink one half liter of clean water.

Nutritional support:

- Review Dr. Michael Lara's web site for empirically supported guidance on managing stress-induced inflammation: <http://www.drmikelara.com/>
- Omega-3 Fatty Acids: capsules/oils, seaweed, algae, krill & cold-water fish.

Eat less CRAP:
 C - carbonated drinks
 R - refined sugar
 A - artificial sweeteners & colors
 P - processed foods

Eat more FOOD:
 F - fruits & veggies
 O - organic lean proteins
 O - omega 3 fatty acids
 D - drink water

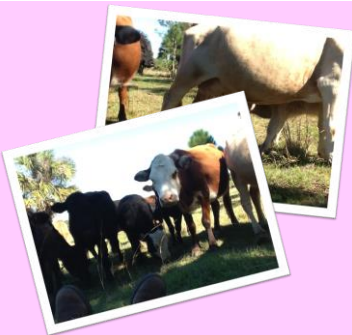


- Polyphenols provide potent anti-inflammatory compounds from plants like: green & white teas, cocoa, lentils, red grapes, oranges, lemons, grapefruit, licorice, green vegetables, onions, curcumin/turmeric, mustard, walnuts, strawberries, apricots, cherries, cinnamon, mango, rhubarb, soy, blueberries, kiwi, plums, apples.
- Mediterranean diet-fruit, vegetables & vegetarian proteins with smaller amounts of whole grains, meat & dairy. The diet emphasizes value of consuming healthy fats, such as those found in olive oil & fish.

Use a checklist to track coping strategies. Do something you enjoy:

- Hobbies
- Volunteer work or work that helps others
- Listening to music
- Playing with a pet
- Going out with a friend - shopping, movie, dining
- Taking a bath or shower
- Writing, painting, or doing other creative activities





- Praying or going to church
- Going outdoors to enjoy nature
- Discussing situations with a spouse or close friend
- Gardening or making home repairs

Learn ways to relax your body:
breathing exercises

- muscle relaxation exercises
- Massage
- Aromatherapy
- Yoga
- relaxing exercises-tai chi, Pilates & qi gong.





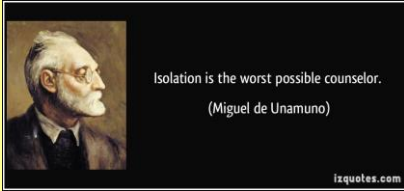
Focus on the present:

- Meditation
- imagery exercises
- self-hypnosis.

Look for the humor in life. Laughter really can be the best medicine.

Making & following through with an action plan to solve your problems represents a powerful stress reliever.





Seek counseling in circumstances of unrelenting stress. Sometimes stress is just too much to handle alone. Consider tethered monkey studies. Talking to a friend or family member may help, but you may also find it beneficial to see a counselor.