

THE OFFICIAL HOMO SAPIENS OPERATOR'S MANUAL: TAKE THE HIGHWAY TO HEALTH



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DEFEATING STRESS AND WORRY

Letting too much stress, tension, or worry in to your Homo sapiens equipment is like trying to run your car's engine without oil or a cooling system.

THE ENEMY WITHIN

Worksheet: *Page 40*

Learner's Workbook: *Page 2*

1. Explain to learners that we live in a challenging, uncertain, and rapidly changing world that can produce tension even in the best of times. Stress is a normal part of life, but when it gets out of hand, it can cause both physical and mental harm.
2. Select volunteers to read worksheet page 40, Learner's Workbook page 2. Discuss with learners what makes them feel stressed and how they can handle those situations.

FIGHT OR FLIGHT

Worksheet *Pages 41 and 42*

Learner's Workbook: *Pages 3 and 4*

1. Inform the group that their bodies respond to mental and emotional danger the same way they do to physical danger. Fear, worry, stress, and guilt begin the same "fight or flight" emergency response mechanism (ERM) that happens when we hear a sudden noise in a dark alley or have a near-accident in traffic.
2. Distribute worksheet pages 41 and 42, Learner's Workbook pages 3 and 4. Have learners pair up and solve a situation of their choosing. Then share answers as a group.

STRESS TEST

Worksheet: *Page 43*

Learner's Workbook: *Page 5*

Have learners take the stress test on worksheet page 43, Learner's Workbook page 5, to determine how vulnerable they are to stress.

THE ENEMY WITHIN

- Stress is a major contributor to the six leading causes of death in the United States today: coronary heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, and suicide. It also makes multiple sclerosis and diabetes worse.
- According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, two-thirds of all office visits to family doctors are prompted by stress-related symptoms.
- Stress can effectively shut down the Homo sapiens' immune system. Research has shown consistently that chronic stress slows down the body's production of natural cancer-fighting cells and lymphocytes.
- Stress causes an estimated \$50 to 75 billion in absenteeism, medical expenses and lost productivity each year.



FIGHT OR FLIGHT

THE PROBLEM:

At the first sign of trouble—whether the danger is physical, mental, or emotional—your subconscious emergency response mechanism (ERM) wants to do something fast! Your heart pounds, your muscles tighten, adrenaline shoots through your system, and all your attention is focused on the emergency. Your subconscious responds to stressful feelings the same way our ancestors responded to the sight of tigers running toward them: it pushes you either to fight or get out of there!

The subconscious mind plays and replays those feelings of fear, worry, and guilt (and the body replays the physical reactions that go with them) until you take action. It doesn't care whether the action is in your best interest or if the results will make you happy or unhappy, rich or poor, sick or healthy. It just wants you to do something. Nothing else matters.

This situation is extremely hard on the Homo sapiens system. It's like revving your car's engine for hours. It drains your mental and physical energy.

THE SOLUTION:

The best response to ERM is to take charge. Tell your subconscious that you'll take over now and be responsible for the situation. Then do something positive to control those feelings of fear, worry, stress, and guilt. If you are hiding feelings or the truth, you may need to communicate with someone. If you've been letting yourself drift into apathy, remind yourself that you have the right and the power to accomplish whatever you want in life. Find your own spiritual voice and bring the song you sing into harmony with your inner and outer world.

Writing about problems often brings them to the conscious level. It makes them concrete, so that you can do something about them. State the stressful problem to yourself and write down some possible answers on a sheet of paper. Come up with an action plan so your energy is going out into the world, rather than getting stuffed back inside you and making your internal alarms go off. When you flush problems and worries out of your subconscious mind and deal with them directly, solutions to "impossible" situations often appear immediately.

FIGHT OR FLIGHT (CONT.)

Think of a flight or fight situation—such as someone bullying or disrespecting you—and write it down (state the problem clearly) along with some possible solutions.

PROBLEM

SOLUTIONS

STRESS TEST

Take this quick quiz to determine how vulnerable you are to stress. It was developed by psychologists Lyle H. Miller and Alma Dell Smith at Boston University Medical Center.

Score each item from 1 (almost always) to 5 (never), depending on how strongly each statement applies to you.

- _____ 1. I eat at least one balanced meal a day.
- _____ 2. I get seven to eight hours of sleep at least four nights a week.
- _____ 3. I give and receive affection regularly.
- _____ 4. I have at least one relative within 50 miles I can rely on.
- _____ 5. I exercise to the point of perspiration at least twice a week.
- _____ 6. I smoke less than half a pack of cigarettes a day.
- _____ 7. I drink fewer than five alcoholic drinks a week.
- _____ 8. I am the right weight for my height.
- _____ 9. My income meets my basic expenses.
- _____ 10. I get strength from my spiritual beliefs.
- _____ 11. I regularly attend club or social activities.
- _____ 12. I have a network of friends and acquaintances.
- _____ 13. I have friends to talk with about personal matters.
- _____ 14. I am in good health (including eyesight, hearing, teeth, etc.)
- _____ 15. I speak openly about my feelings when angry or worried.
- _____ 16. I have regular conversations with the people with whom I live about domestic problems (chores, money, food, etc.)
- _____ 17. I do something fun at least once a week.
- _____ 18. I organize my time effectively.
- _____ 19. I drink fewer than three cups of coffee (tea or cola) a day.
- _____ 20. I take quiet time for myself during the day.
- _____ TOTAL

Add up the numbers and subtract 20. Any number higher than 30 indicates a vulnerability to stress. You are seriously vulnerable if your score is between 50 and 75 and **extremely vulnerable** if your score is more than 75.