

Susan's Healthy Living



Choose a Balanced, StressLess Lifestyle

by Susan Smith Jones, PhD ©

(Excerpt from Susan's book—*BE HEALTHY~STAY BALANCED*)

Make Stress Your Friend

Stress is a major problem in modern life. Technological advances have increased the pressure to keep busy, even during leisure hours. We talk on the telephone while we drive, watch television while we read, and conduct business while we listen to the radio. We are all continually overstimulated.

Most of you reading this book receive more information from television, computers, radio and satellites than our ancestors of several generations ago ever could have imagined! This year alone you will probably make more appointments, meet more people and go more places than your grandparents did in their entire lives. All this manic rushing around creates a life filled with stress.

Given our current pace, we have little time to relax and cultivate relationships with our spouses, children, friends and nature. Is it any wonder that stress-related diseases are now on the rise? Some studies even suggest that 80-90 percent of all doctor visits are for stress-related complaints. Stress-related illness is implicated in our rapidly escalating health care costs, and health problems attributed to job stress are estimated to cost U.S. businesses \$150 billion every year.

I see unrelenting stress as a sickness of epidemic proportions—a “busyness” or “hurry” sickness. But you don't have to let it overwhelm you. You can *choose* to slow down, relax and create a life of balance and joy. Let's see if you can find any of these signs of “hurry” sickness in your daily life.

- 1. Do you eat in a rush, eat while standing or walking, or eat while driving?**
- 2. Does your busy life prevent you from spending much time at home? And when you finally get home, are you too tired to do much beyond collapse and “veg out” in front of the television?**

- 3. Do you routinely drive too fast, run yellow lights, constantly change lanes and jockey for position? Are you impatient with other drivers?**
- 4. Do you talk fast, have problems communicating how you feel, and lack the time to give emotional support to your family and friends?**
- 5. Is your life so full of undone chores and responsibilities that relaxing has become almost impossible?**
- 6. When you're not doing something productive, do you experience anxiety and guilt?**
- 7. Do you often feel tired and run-down, cry easily or have trouble sleeping?**
- 8. Have vacations become more trouble than they're worth?**

What causes our need to rush and discount our own physical health needs? We can blame it on economics — and the need to make enough money to pay for all of our chosen lifestyles. We can blame it on the fact that everything's moving so fast, and we have to, too. But I believe the real cause is something deeper. By crowding our schedule with “more”—more socializing, more eating, more work, more activity, more appointments—we may be trying to fill the emptiness we feel inside ourselves.

When you constantly direct your attention outward, it's easy to lose the sense of inner wonder, calmness, balance and beauty where true happiness, joy and peace originate. By slowing down and redirecting your energies inward, not only will you train your brain to relax, you

will begin to reestablish the wholesome sense of self-worth necessary to positively change your life.

Is Stress Getting the Best of You?

How do you know when stress is getting the best of you? According to the latest edition of the *Harvard Medical School Family Health Guide*, physical symptoms of stress include headache, heart disease (two symptoms are atherosclerosis and high blood pressure), insomnia, absence of periods in women, impotence or premature ejaculation in men, digestive tract disturbances (such as ulcerative colitis, irritable bowel syndrome, gastritis, peptic and duodenal ulcers), back pain, frequent colds, shallow breathing, racing heart, herpes virus breakouts, slow wound healing and tight neck and shoulders.

Behavioral symptoms include an increase in smoking, an increase in alcohol consumption, grinding teeth, compulsive eating, an inability to get things done and bossiness. Emotional symptoms of stress include edginess, loneliness, nervousness, crying and a sense of powerlessness. Cognitive symptoms include forgetfulness, inability to make decisions, trouble thinking clearly, thoughts of escape, incessant worrying and lack of creativity.

You may not be able to change your boss's tendency to favor weekend workdays or control the bumper-to-bumper traffic to and from work, but you do have access to some powerful stress-busting tools. The simple fact that you are perusing this book tells me that you may be feeling out of balance and stressed out in one or several areas of your life. As a holistic lifestyle coach and healthy living counselor for more than 30 years, I've worked with thousands of people around the world. I offer my clients simple, yet essential, choices to bring purpose, balance and health back into their lives. Stress may be a fact of modern life, but you don't have to let it become your way of life. You can become the master of your life, create a lifestyle of vitality and joy, and keep noisome stress to a minimum. *The path to contentment is in choosing to have your life in balance.*

You Can Do It Too!

Recently, I gave a talk in Los Angeles on "*StressLess Living: The Power to Be Your Best*," during which I shared the essential stress-buster choices you'll read about later in this book. After my presentation, I went into the ladies' room and found a woman crying. I recognized her. She had been sitting in the front row of the audience and had cried through much of my talk. Since I had no plans for the evening, I asked if she would like to join me for dinner. She was surprised by my unexpected invitation, but she smiled, wiped away a tear, and nodded yes.

Melissa's story was heartbreaking. Her husband recently had left her for a much younger woman. She was almost one hundred pounds overweight, had no job, was living temporarily with her sister and needed to find a

new home for herself and her children. She was so clearly depressed, she was actually considering suicide. One morning, when she was feeling at her lowest, she took a walk and noticed a flyer for my talk in the window of a natural food store. Something inside her told her she had to attend—even though she had never attended a motivational talk before.

Melissa believed in the ideas I discussed but wasn't sure how to implement them in her life. She knew she was falling downhill, but she didn't know how to climb back up. She wanted more than anything to turn her life around—to find a job and a decent place for her children, to lose weight and get back into shape, and to live a balanced life. After listening to her story, I asked her to consider the possibility that the universe was taking everything away from her so that she could and would, for the first time in her life, put *herself* first. Like most women, she was so accustomed to putting everyone else's needs before her own that she took no time for herself. She was learning the hard way that you can't run on empty forever. She was being forced to learn that she had to take loving care of herself first, before she could nurture, love and take care of others.

I told Melissa that if she were willing to make a real commitment to do whatever it took to live her highest vision, I would be happy to work with her. For the rest of that evening, I asked her to share with me her highest vision and to answer questions like: "If you couldn't fail and if you were living your best life—right now—what would that look like?" At the end of the evening, I wrote out a walking and meditation/prayer program that she could start the very next morning.

Over the next month, I designed a nutrition program for Melissa that included cleaning out her refrigerator and cupboards and removing all the processed (and junk) foods that didn't align with her new vision of herself. I taught her how to shop for healthy foods and nutritional supplements, how to make fresh vegetable juices and smoothies, and how to create meals that emphasized organic, natural, colorful foods. As well, I customized a cardio-weights-stretching routine for her that she could do at home or at a gym. I also taught her how to visualize her goals and practice deep breathing and meditation. Finally, she and her sister purchased a water purifier so that they could all benefit from the healing power of alkaline water that has a pH of around 9.0. **(For more information on my favorite water purifier, *Ionizer Plus*, please visit my website: www.SusanSmithJones.com and click on *Favorite Products*.)**

As it turned out, Melissa's favorite stress release and healthy living practice, from everything that I taught her, was making fresh vegetable and fruit smoothies and juices in her new *Total Blender by Blendtec*. (If you visit www.SusanSmithJones.com, and click on *Favorite Products*, you will learn more about this stellar blender. Not only is there an article you can peruse, there are also

a variety of audio interviews that you can listen to at *Favorite Products*.) Her kids loved juicing/blending, too, and actually took it over as one of their daily chores. Of course, I also encouraged them to start drinking more purified water, too. Melissa confessed to me that she couldn't ever remember drinking more than 3-4 glasses of water a day. When I told her that I drink at least two quarts of purified, alkalized water every day, and an additional 2-3 glasses of juice made fresh daily in my juicer, she was surprised and motivated to increase her daily water and juice intake.



Melissa was an inspiration to me, her family and all of her friends. Her dedication and commitment created miraculous results. Three weeks after getting her part-time job, she applied for and was hired for a full-time one at a florist shop. Within four months she had saved enough money to move into a large, new apartment with her very happy children.

Today, Melissa is down to her ideal weight, works out regularly, frequents natural food stores and manages the florist shop. She now lives with a sense of freedom, control and power over her life. She learned, firsthand, that breakthroughs and miracles occur when you are willing to live a balanced life—one that minimizes stress and maximizes joy.

Dying to succeed

Arthur, the president of a major American corporation, came to see me for a consultation. He also was very stressed out, but for different reasons than Melissa. He was impatient, aggressive and sometimes hostile. He was totally unaware of how to make the necessary choices to quell stress and support his well-being. He routinely put

in six or seven long, pressure-packed days a week at the office or traveling on business. He always had to be first, always had to be right, and always had to be busy with work to feel worthwhile. Playful behavior did not enter into his lifestyle.

As a fancier of rich foods and a popular high-fat diet, he put away vast quantities of cheese, ice cream, steak, butter, processed foods and cream sauces. He knew his food was loaded with cholesterol and saturated fat, but he loved it all the same. As he told me once, when it came to food, he could resist anything but temptation. His exercise was shifting gears in one of his expensive sports cars.

Arthur was chronically exhausted, but he thought that if he just had more time to spend in his hot tub with a drink, he could easily relax and “unwind.” He had trouble sleeping at night, and experienced frequent headaches and backaches. He also developed several colds and a few bouts of the flu each year, but he assumed that was normal, and usually continued to work when sick. It wasn't until he began to sink into a deep depression that his wife urged him to have a medical checkup—his first in more than five years.

The doctor's report came as a shock to Arthur. He was only forty-five years old, but he had high blood pressure and serious hardening of the arteries (a symptom of heart disease). He was told that if he didn't make some changes in his way of life immediately, he was headed for a heart attack within six months. He also was headed toward needing quadruple-bypass heart surgery.

As providence would have it, the day after receiving the doctor's report, a friend of Arthur's told him about my holistic health private retreats and gave him several of my books and audio programs. Arthur quickly sought me out.

During the months we worked together, Arthur truly became a great inspiration to me, partly because his transformation was so dramatic. I had never worked with anyone quite so stressed and desperate, or who led such an unhealthy life. Fortunately, we were able to direct Arthur's innate drive to succeed toward a wholesome goal. During our first visit he made an important personal choice—he chose to make a commitment to change his life and restore the health of his younger years.

I immediately started Arthur off with meditation and mindfulness training. As I explained to him, according to the cover story in *Time* magazine on “The Science of Meditation” (August 4, 2003), meditation can help people reduce the psychological and physical effects of high stress. In the study, the participants who underwent “mindfulness training” experienced an average 54 percent reduction in psychological distress after three months on the program. The group that did not receive the meditation training experienced no significant reduction in their stress. (You'll learn more about meditation in Part 2 of this book.) Arthur took to this meditation discipline like a butterfly to buddleia (that's a beautiful, colorful butterfly-attracting plant).

The other practice I prescribed for him was bodywork at least two times a week. He worked with me and a variety of other bodywork practitioners, exploring massage, acupressure, acupuncture, aromatherapy and energy healing so that he could determine what was of most help to him. All of these disciplines can help reduce tension, relieve headaches and backaches, improve sleep and bring relaxation, calm and balance back into your life. A skilled massage therapist can knead tensed muscles and help dissipate any stress you may be holding in.

Today, Arthur and his entire family are the picture of health. Recently they all participated in a 10-K run, and the following day they left on a two-week health and fitness vacation.

As Melissa and Arthur learned, choosing to live a balanced, *stressless* life, one filled with vibrant health, means much more than just feeling fine. It's about body, mind, and spirit working as one—harmoniously. It's hard to celebrate life when you're totally stressed out or when you're burdened with aches and pains, lethargy, obesity, heart disease, cancer, arthritis and the other prevalent diseases and ailments of our society. In my decades in holistic health work, I have seen thousands of people markedly improve their well-being and enrich their lives through the simple lifestyle and behavior changes that you'll read about in detail in Part 2 of this book.

But for now, please give this some thought: What changes can you make in your life *today or this week* that will put *you* on the path to looking and feeling great? And what can you do in the next hour that will make a positive difference in how you feel. Choose to take action NOW!



Foreword by Former UCLA Basketball Coach John Wooden

*When Susan asked me to write the foreword for her new book, **BE HEALTHY~STAY BALANCED: 21 Simple Choices to Create More Joy & Less Stress**, I was somewhat hesitant, but after taking advantage of the opportunity for an advance reading, I was delighted. For thirty years, Susan was a fitness instructor at UCLA, motivating and inspiring students, staff and faculty to become healthy and fit—and to celebrate life.*

This book is informative and refreshing. Although Susan's exploration of "holistic" living isn't really new, she nonetheless has a special ability to take complex ideas and experiences and to present them in a clear, practical and engaging manner. What I really appreciate about Susan is her ability to articulate feelings and describe experiences all of us have had in a way that allows us to understand our own challenges and to see more clearly who and what we are as Divine beings and how we can live our highest potential. Susan explores the elements necessary to create a life filled with positive choices and positive results. She shows us how health and happiness are not just "feeling fine" but are, as she writes, "body, mind and spirit working as one—harmoniously." This happens, she says, as a direct result of the choices we make in life—how we eat, exercise, think, play and rest. Yes, it is true that the choices we make in life and our ability to keep all things in proper perspective are what make us who we are.

For many years now, in my coaching, writing and lectures, I have talked about my "Pyramid to Success," how each of us must take responsibility for our lives, and how we can all enrich the quality of life on this planet by how we choose to live. Susan conveys this message with love and a sincere desire to assist you in creating a life beyond your highest dreams. She has done an outstanding job of tying together the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual nature of life in her unique holistic approach to successful living. She has great insight, and the world will be a better and more knowledgeable place because of her commitment to teaching the truth about health and living fully. Since I am a firm believer that love and balance are the most important essentials for a good life, I found this underlying thought very meaningful.

*This is one of the most complete books I have read on how to live a balanced life. I recommend it to anyone who wants to be healthier, happier and more at peace with themselves and who wants to make a difference in this world. I know the hundreds of thousands of people all over the world who love Susan and whose lives have been enhanced by her message are eagerly looking forward to this new book. They have a treat in store. In clear and beautiful prose, Susan tells us that health and peace are a conscious choice. And reading her esteemed, uplifting book, **BE HEALTHY~STAY BALANCED**, is a vital step in making that choice.*

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