

Why
Make
Yourself
Crazy?

**30 Strategies for
a Stress-Free Life**

G. Gaynor McTigue

*Author of **Life's Little Frustration Book***

SPECIAL PREVIEW EDITION

***Why Make Yourself Crazy?
30 Strategies for a Stress-Free Life***

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Introduction

Welcome! This special preview edition of *Why Make Yourself Crazy?* is your introduction to a proven, breakthrough program for eliminating the stress, anxiety and clutter in your life.

Rather than just relieve your stress, each strategy goes right to the source of the stress and gives you the tools, motivation and attitude changes you need to actually *reverse* the stressful habits and mind sets you've developed over the course of your life. They really work! These tips are currently being used with great success by *thousands* of people worldwide.

If you, too, are benefiting from this life-altering advice, you can download the full **300-tip program**—a strategy for virtually every stressful situation you face! Go to:

<http://www.pickmeupbooks.com/stressbook>

And feel free to pass along this preview edition of *Why Make Yourself Crazy?* to your friends, family and coworkers. Simply attach the file to an email. Or, you can print it out. Thanks for trying out our stress program!

Eliminate meaningless deadlines.

Our life is full of them. Arbitrary and unrealistic time constraints imposed by ourselves and others that serve only to make us more pressured, anxious, stressed out. For no worthwhile reason! Avoid the trap of assigning time frames to everything you do, especially if you have little idea how long it will take. Instead, make your goal one of completing a project in a careful, professional, satisfying manner. In other words, as long as it takes to do it right. Save your nerves, and your energy, for the real deadlines you face.

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Cut down on competitive stress.

Today, we compete for everything: the space around us, to be first to own a new product, to get our kids signed up for programs, to get our viewpoints across, to be faster, smarter, richer, sexier. Our days are filled with stressful competitions. And most are absolutely unnecessary. Because they're driven by insecurity, fear of being left behind, an ingrained need to always have more or better than the next guy. Try to get above all that. If you want to compete, vie to be the one who stays calm and in control, who isn't easily sucked in by material things, who avoids being caught up in the daily grab-bag that robs people of health and peace of mind. Compete for that and see how pointless all those other competitions become. And how misguided those who partake in them begin to appear.

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Throw something out every day.

You've got too much stuff in your house. Office. Garage. Attic. Useless clutter that's weighing you down, getting in the way, obscuring the things you really need. Be realistic. If you're not going to use it, lose it. And you don't have to make a humongous project out of it. Every day, find one thing you don't need and toss it. Or give it away. Over time, the clutter will begin to vanish and space and order will magically appear in your home...and your life.

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Don't overload your travel itinerary.

It's one of the biggest mistakes of recreational travel: trying to squeeze in too many cities, sites, museums, tours, events, and side trips...leaving you overwhelmed, exhausted and unable to appreciate much of anything. On your vacation! Better to limit your attractions to what you can leisurely and fully enjoy. With plenty of in-between time to linger over a meal, observe the local people, and discover things on your own...the best part of traveling anyway. Don't pressure yourself into seeing everything just to say you have.

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"The tips provide a laugh, a chuckle, a nod, or a sigh... and then I feel I can go on with my day. The writing style feels as if I am hearing from a friend, telling me to slow down, take care and listen! Good job and please keep going! Cheers."

—B.R., Chatham, NJ

Don't feel guilty when you can't always give.

You're besieged with requests to give money. To charities, schools, churches, community groups, political organizations, fundraising events... You're solicited by mail, email, telephone, fax, ads, neighbors, coworkers, strangers. Each may be a worthy cause in itself, but collectively the relentless demands can drive you nuts...if not into debt. Sure, you should give. As generously as yours means allow. But give selectively to those causes you feel most passionate about. And the ones you can't afford, don't let yourself, or anyone else, make you feel guilty about. You can't be responsible for all the ills of the world. You do what you can. So never fret over keeping those free return-address stickers or greeting cards, even if you didn't give.

Why make yourself crazy?

It's okay to change your mind.

There's a disturbing trend in today's culture to brand as weak anyone who changes a position on a particular issue. True if your views waver like a blade of grass swaying in the breeze. But if your altered stance is the result of new evidence learned, a key shift in circumstances, or a serious grappling with the issue, you have every right to change your mind. In truth, it's a sign of strength and maturity to do so in the face of possible criticism. Indeed, it's those whose pride and ego prevent them from abandoning failed positions who should be deemed weak. Don't let anyone belittle you, or discourage you from switching viewpoints. Firmly state that you now see things differently, you've changed your mind, and that's that.

Why make yourself crazy?

Don't live your life through a camera lens.

Sometimes we're so anxious to get our trip, milestone or special occasion on film, we all but miss the event itself! Look, you're never going to enjoy something more than when it's actually happening. So why blunt the experience by peering at it through a view finder? Or fussing over angles, poses and camera settings? A couple of quick snapshots or video clips will suffice to chronicle the event and establish the who, what, when and where. Most of these pictures usually end up in a box somewhere anyway, rarely if ever seen. Be a participant rather than an observer. Your firsthand memory will be far more poignant than anything you put on celluloid.

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Avoid eating as a response to stress.

Remember when people used to grab a cigarette during moments of stress? Thankfully, most have managed to kick the habit. Now unfortunately it's food many of us reach for at such times, for both good stress and bad stress. Be careful. Monitor yourself in such situations. Do you want that snack because you're genuinely hungry? Or are you just looking for a way to dissipate some anxiety? Adding excess calories and unwanted weight will only lock you into a harmful stress/eating cycle. Try other instant stress relievers like those covered in previous tips: slow deep breathing, standing up and stretching, taking walks, meditating. Curb the urge to eat your way out of tight situations.

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to your family, friends and coworkers!**

Don't fall victim to a chronic talker.

It's polite to hear someone out for a reasonable length of time. But if a person is hogging the conversation at a dinner party, chewing your ear off at the office, or simply isn't interested in what anyone else has to say...you have every right to cut them short. Chronic yakkers will numb your brain, steal your time, chill a convivial mood, and stress you out. Interrupt. Bring others into the conversation. Or simply excuse yourself and leave. If this sends a message, so much the better. Insensitive people don't understand subtlety. Give one-sided conversationalists the hook.

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Put the kids to work.

For many children, life is a posh resort, every need fulfilled, parents waiting on them hand and foot. Okay when they're very young, foolish when they're old enough to take on responsibility...and take some of the burden off you. Love them, but don't spoil them. Assign chores and projects commensurate with their age (making beds, clearing the table, vacuuming the floor, taking the garbage out). Pay them for extra, non-routine work like washing the car or pulling weeds. And don't be so quick to step in for them when they start to whine or balk. Toughing it out builds character. They win. You win.

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Have small, intimate get-togethers.

Big parties are expensive, time-consuming and a heck of a lot of work. Even if you're lucky enough to talk to everyone, it may only amount to brief, cursory snippets of conversation. Big bashes can be fun, if you're not the one throwing it. Smaller parties are easier to arrange, less work, less expensive, and leave lots of time to enjoy your guests, who feel more special, too. Entertain fewer people...more often.

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"You present solid, sensitive advice that's so practical, you must be 105 years old to have gained all that life experience. You're spot on! Thanks for often de-stressing my days."

—P.B., Norwalk, CT

Lose an argument.

That's right, lose an argument. When was the last time you looked someone squarely in the face and said, "You know, you're right. I'm wrong. Thanks for straightening me out." Hard to do, isn't it? We'd sooner cling to a worthless position than admit we're in error. But a humbling concession now and then is a great relief. Because it removes the onerous pressure of trying to defend a flawless façade. An image that fools no one. And displays weakness rather than character. (Don't we see it every day in our politicians?) Lose an argument. Show humility. You'll gain a lot more respect and credibility.

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Don't flip out choosing wallpaper.

Or a paint color. A tie. Fabric. Even an ice cream flavor. There are enough choices out there freak us all out. So try this. Make the selection process a series of one-on-one competitions. Pick a style that's appealing, then try to beat it. If you can trump it, discard the first one and try to knock off the second. And so on. It's a lot less taxing than trying to evaluate a whole bunch of selections at once. And when you finally find something you can't beat...*buy*.

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Do menial things ordinarily done for you.

Every now and then perform some good, tough, manual tasks. Grow a salad, paint your house, change your car's oil, wash your clothes by hand, chop your own firewood, catch a fish for dinner, make soups and baked goods from scratch. You'll experience a primal satisfaction in meeting basic needs that our over-pampering society now shields us from. The physical exertion will also reduce your stress. And you'll appreciate more how good you really have it. So roll up your sleeves, get your hands dirty, and experience the gritty joy of life the way it used to be.

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**Don't feel guilty losing
touch with people.**

You could spend the rest of your life trying to keep up with all the people you've grown close to over the years. Nice if it was possible, but unnecessary and impractical. Accept that those you no longer associate with, or have moved away, will soon fall out of your loop. As undoubtedly you will theirs. And that's okay. Perhaps someday you'll get together. Perhaps not. In any case, at least you'll have each other's memories. So don't be down on yourself, or fault the other person, for drifting apart. It's only natural.

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Don't get all worked up over little things.

Like a late charge for a payment you made on time...not being enrolled in a program you signed up for...a no-show appointment...a package that doesn't arrive...an article left behind. Your initial reaction might be one of outrage, injustice, exasperation. Mostly because now you have to find out what went wrong and correct it—on top of everything else you have to do. Stay calm. Expect to be blindsided by these unpleasant little surprises...and roll with them. You'll find that things are rarely as bad as your initial reaction to them. And often have a perfectly rational explanation... or a simple solution.

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Learn to live with daily "stresslets."

"Stresslets" are those momentary little delays, disruptions or setbacks that cause a pin prick of aggravation dozens, even hundreds of times a day. Examples: a Web page taking an extra second to load, a jarring phone interruption, an untied shoelace, a misplaced pen, a dropped file folder. Stresslets are a product of our high-tech, fast-paced expectations...a growing intolerance to glitches of any kind. They can shorten your breath, heighten tension, promote irritability...and lumped together, add up to major stress. You simply have to factor them in as a given in life, ignore them, and weigh their insignificance against the enormous gains in productivity and convenience you enjoy today. Don't get strung out over stresslets.

Why make yourself crazy?

Work changes into your life gradually.

No crash diets. No sudden, intense workout programs. No radical overhauls of who and what you are. You might maintain it for a while, but it can't last. True change takes lots of small, mindful, subtle decisions over time that add up to bigger, more enduring transformations. They're less disruptive to you and everyone else, and inevitably get the results you want. Be patient. If you're really intent on change, you should develop the staying power to achieve it without having to act rashly. Do it by degrees.

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Take a tech holiday.

Spend a day unplugged. No cell phones, TVs, computers, video games, DVDs, personal stereos, or other digitally fed distractions. Instead, strive to have face-to-face conversations, read books, take walks, play with the kids, visit friends, or just sit quietly and think. Find out how soothing and restorative it is to be *unconnected* once in a while. And how refreshing it is to take a break from our growing dependency on these devices, which are meant to be tools, not ends in themselves. Keep technology in its proper perspective. And your humanity first and foremost.

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Observe other people under stress.

Notice how they rush things. How tense and wound up they can get. How they're always apologizing for falling behind or making mistakes. How they never seem to be in control, bouncing from one thing to the next, leaving loose ends and unfinished business in their wake. That may be YOU! Or where you're headed. So study people under stress and think about how they could improve their lives. (We're always better at critiquing others, aren't we?) Then apply that counsel to your own life. You can learn a lot about yourself simply by observing others.

Why make yourself crazy?

"I enjoy terribly these stress tips and they do relieve stress when you follow them. You just keep on learning, trying them on and before long they become routines... easy to do."

—FVU, Kissimmee, FL

Leave a cushion of time between events.

Scheduling appointments, meetings and projects too closely together is a guaranteed stress fest. It leaves you vulnerable to even the slightest delays, which *will* occur. You'll always have one eye on the clock and be distracted, rushed and prone to miss things and make mistakes. Be smart. Spread your schedule out. Use the in-between time to collect yourself, take care of incidental things, prepare yourself for your next event, and of course allow for any delays. That extra cushion of time will leave you less frazzled, and more productive, in the long run.

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**Don't be sucked in by
euphemistic language.**

People have ways of coloring things more rosily than they really are. So when you hear them say things like the following (in quotes), be alert to what they *really* mean (in parentheses): "I shouldn't be long." (Hope you brought a book with you.) "Our prices are competitive." (We're just as expensive as everyone else.) "Some assembly required." (What are you doing this weekend?) "We can still be friends." (There will be a brief interim period before I dump you altogether.) "You have been specially selected to participate in this once-in-a-lifetime offer." (We got your name off a certified chump list.) "We'll have to get together for lunch sometime." (Have a nice life.) When you hear any of the above, or similar statements, an alert should go off.

Why make yourself crazy?

Delegate.

Stress is often caused by an inability to let go, a constant need to micromanage, the fear that everything will fall apart the minute you turn your back. It leaves you hung up on time-consuming details, stifles the participation and growth of others, and creates unnecessary tension all around. Take the leap of faith. Learn to delegate. Assign responsibilities and give others the chance to prove themselves. You can dole it out gradually, to gain confidence and minimize error, but begin unburdening yourself of the oppressive minutia that's needlessly choking your life. You can experience a marked reduction in stress, in a relatively short time, simply by delegating.

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Gird yourself for ineptitude on the road.

Today, it's not *if* another motorist will do something stupid every time you're out driving...but *when*. So be ready for it. Drive calmly yet alertly so you can quickly react to any surprises they'll spring on you. Expect that the car ahead will cut in front of you without signaling...that another vehicle will always be glued to your rear bumper...that an oncoming car won't dim its high beams until it's crested a hill and blinded you. Expect it, drive defensively in anticipation of it, and you'll enjoy a smoother, less stressful ride. (And you'll be less likely to do something stupid yourself.)

Why make yourself crazy?

Take ten minutes a day to neaten up.

Supplement your regularly scheduled cleaning by spending a short time each day neatening your home. Use those few minutes to clear a cluttered surface, tidy a child's room, clean out a drawer, throw out a useless item or two, dust a long-forgotten place, wash a single window, put something away...or whatever obvious need is staring you in the face. You'll be amazed at how much this small attention to neatness can accomplish over time. And how organized and productive you'll become. And when you do get around to more intense cleaning, the job will be that much easier. Take ten minutes a day to tidy up.

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Put affection back into your relationship.

A small amount of affection can melt days, months, even years of tension, distance and discord between you and your partner. Take the initiative, swallow your pride and rekindle the affection you once thrived on. A reassuring hand on the shoulder, a simple kiss, a gentle hug are good places to start. Keep at it, even if it's not immediately returned or acknowledged. In time a thaw will take hold, and warmth and intimacy likely ensue. A daily dose of affection can often soothe what words can't.

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Toss around radical changes in your mind.

Such as, moving to another town, starting a new career, taking up a totally different kind of pastime. As extreme and unlike-you they may seem, remember, they're only scenarios in your head. It doesn't cost anything to try them on, see how they fit, and no one else need know. Every time you revisit them, they'll become a little less scary, and slightly more doable. Use your imagination to break out of hemmed-in, intransigent perspectives. It could be the precursor to real change and an extraordinarily better life for you. Go ahead, fantasize. It's *free*.

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One sport per child per season.

There are more than enough opportunities during the year for your child to participate in different sports, without having to cram several into one season. Shuttling kids around like a madman on weekends stresses out the entire family, at a time when everyone should be stress-*free*. It also isn't fair to coaches and teammates when conflicts cause your child to miss important games and practices. Why overschedule leisure? Limit each child to a single sport per season. He or she can focus on it, get better at it, and you can enjoy watching it. You'll also have more time together as a family.

Why make yourself crazy?

Don't let your backlog of projects get you down.

There are things you need to take care of that aren't getting done. And it's eating away at you...because it's not like you to let things go like that. But your overloaded schedule isn't yielding an inch right now. The thing *not* to do is torture yourself about it. You're not a shirker, you're not irresponsible if you flat out can't get to it. So ease up on yourself. If you have every intention of completing these projects, you will. As unlikely as it seems now, the time will present itself. And true to your ethic, you'll come through.

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Prepare for tomorrow...tonight.

Why wait till the last frantic minute to pick out your clothes, do needed ironing, set the breakfast table, shine your shoes, prepare the kids' lunches, and gather what you'll need for work? Take 15 or 20 minutes and do it this evening, when you're calm, unhurried and less likely to err or forget. You'll not only sleep better knowing you're ready, you'll spare yourself a lot of excess stress in the morning. Do it tonight.

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Keep going! Download the other 270 strategies and eliminate stress, anxiety and clutter from your life forever! Go to:

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"Your stress tips have been great! My wife and I read them every day and find that many of them really hit home with both of us. You have a common sense approach that is easy to understand and implement into our daily lives."

—Paul and Dayla, Encino, CA