

WALL STREET JOURNAL
bestselling author

Success Factors

STRESS IS MY SUPERPOWER

Comes
With a **7-DAY**
STRESS
CHALLENGE

WES BERRY

keynote speaker | wordsmith

***Business
Quick
Reads***
Series Volume 10

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"Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the fastest lion, or it will be killed. Every morning a lion wakes up. It knows it must outrun the slowest gazelle, or it will starve to death. It doesn't matter whether you're a lion or a gazelle. When the sun comes up, you'd better be running."

- Unknown

STRESS Is My SUPERPOWER

And 7-DAY STRESS CHALLENGE

By: Wes Berry

Stress is a ubiquitous experience that everyone goes through at one point or another in their lives. It

can come in many forms, ranging from everyday nuisances like traffic jams and deadlines to traumatic events like accidents, natural disasters, or the loss of a loved one. Stress can be overwhelming and, at times, can feel like it is consuming us, leaving us with a sense of powerlessness and anxiety. However, it is also true that stress can bring out the best in us and even lead to remarkable feats of strength and courage, turning ordinary people into superheroes. One such example is the story of a man who became a local hero in Tucson, Arizona, after lifting a car to save a young man's life.

It was 2006, a warm summer evening in Arizona, when Boyle and his wife Elizabeth were driving home from dinner at a local shopping mall. As they waited to pull out into traffic, they saw a Camaro speeding down the road, leaving behind a trail of sparks. As they followed the car, they suddenly saw something that stopped them in their tracks: a bike

folded up from the impact and a young man pinned underneath the car.

Without a second thought, Boyle leaped out of the car and ran towards the Camaro. For a few harrowing seconds, the car dragged the young man, 18-year-old Kyle Holtrust, along the road until it finally came to a stop. Holtrust was screaming in agony, his leg pinned between the car and the frame of his bike while the other was jammed between the bike and the asphalt. Boyle reached under the frame of the car and lifted, with a sound of groaning metal. The car eased a few inches upward, and Holtrust screamed for him to lift it higher. Boyle braced himself, took a deep breath, and heaved again. The front end lifted a few more inches, and finally, the young man was free.

Boyle's remarkable act of heroism quickly gained national attention, with media outlets hailing him as a real-life superhero. He was interviewed by newspapers and TV stations and even received an award from the YMCA. Yet, even after all the

accolades, Boyle couldn't quite explain how he was able to summon the strength and courage to lift the car. He knew *why* he did it—because he couldn't bear to watch someone suffer like that without trying to help—but the “how” remained a mystery.

In retrospect, Boyle's act of heroism was likely due to a combination of factors. First and foremost, his empathy and compassion for another human being in distress overrode any fear or doubt he might have had. Secondly, the intense stress of the situation triggered a surge of adrenaline and focus that allowed him to perform an incredible physical feat. Finally, Boyle's years of physical labor as a construction worker likely contributed to his ability to lift heavy objects.

Boyle's story is a powerful reminder of the incredible strength and resilience that lies within us all, waiting to be unleashed in times of need.

Boyle's experience that evening left a lasting impression on him. He had tapped into a reserve of strength and courage that he never knew existed. The

intense stress of the situation had pushed him beyond his limits and, in doing so, had transformed him into a real-life superhero.

In the aftermath of the incident, Boyle struggled to reconcile the image he had of himself with the newfound heroism that he had displayed. He was amazed at his own abilities, but he also recognized that there was a darker side to his experience. He had been confronted with the fragility of life and the realization that tragedy can strike at any moment. He knew that he was lucky to have been there to help, but he also recognized that luck had played a role in the outcome.

Over time, Boyle came to accept his experience as a gift. He began to see himself as someone who had been given a second chance, a chance to make a real difference in the world. He became involved in local charities, and he spent time volunteering at his church. He used his experience to inspire others, speaking at community events and

schools about the importance of courage, compassion, and perseverance.

Boyle's story is a powerful reminder of the potential that lies within all of us. We may not always know what we're capable of until we're put to the test. But when the moment comes, and the world seems to slow down around us, we have a choice. We can succumb to fear and helplessness, or we can tap into our inner reserves of strength and become real-life superheroes.

Stress

The human body is designed to cope with

The human body is designed to cope with stress.

stress, and when we are in a stressful situation, our body responds by

releasing a cascade of hormones and chemicals that prepare us for action. The adrenal gland, located on top of the kidney, releases adrenaline, noradrenaline, and

cortisol, which increases our heart rate, breathing rate, and blood pressure, providing a surge of energy and focus for tackling the task at hand. The sympathetic nervous system also kicks into high gear, activating the "fight or flight" response, which helps us respond to threats and danger. This heightened state of arousal can make us feel more alert, aware, and focused and can also temporarily enhance our physical strength and endurance.

Stress is a tricky emotion to navigate, and when it becomes chronic, it can take a toll on our physical and mental well-being. But did you know that how we think about stress plays a big part in how it affects us?

The hero and the panicked individual both experience the same physiological effects of stress, such as a pounding heart, faster breathing, and sweating. However, the difference between the two lies in their mindset. The panicked individual may view these physical responses as a sign of failure or

inadequacy, causing them to feel anxious and fearful. On the other hand, the hero is able to shift their perspective and see these stress responses as helpful. They view the physical changes as a sign that their body is energizing and preparing them for action. This shift in mindset allows them to become more confident and better equipped to meet the challenges they encounter. The hero is able to harness the power of stress, using it as a tool to push them to greatness, while the panicked individual is overwhelmed by it. It's all about the way we interpret and perceive the physiological effects of stress that leads to different outcomes.

A recent study¹ showed that when participants viewed their stress response as helpful, their blood vessels remained relaxed, and their heart rates increased. This means that we can change our physical response to stress by changing our perspective on stress.

Think of stress as a superpower, like a secret weapon. When harnessed correctly, it can push you to greatness. So, next time you feel stress creeping in, take a deep breath and remember that learning how to manage it effectively can lead to a happier and healthier you.

For years, we've been under the impression that stress is like that annoying in-law who shows up uninvited and overstays their welcome. But the relationship between stress and our health is more complicated than we thought. In a study that followed 30,000 adults in the United States for eight years, researchers discovered that people who believed stress was harmful to their health were more likely to have health issues than those who didn't think stress was toxic. So, it's not the stress itself that's the problem. It's our belief that it's harmful. Instead of viewing stress as a sworn enemy, let's start looking for ways to manage it healthily.

Let's change our approach from fearing stress and start putting "fight or flight" to work for us. Let's embrace it. Start utilizing that extra boost of adrenaline for the strength and motivation to make things happen. The entire effect of the stress response is to give you the extra strength you need to work late and motivate you to deliver results. The problem occurs when all those hormones start pumping, and we don't put them to use. That's when our hands start to shake, and confusion starts to flood our thoughts.

In a scene from the movie *Forest Gump*, Tom Hanks, who plays Forest, says, "My mama always said life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get." Well, stress is a big part of life, and like that box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna get. But let's get real. Stress can be a real pain in the butt. It can have both positive and negative effects on our health and well-being, depending on how we react to it. Every hero in history was filled

with the strength of a well-balanced "fight or flight" response.

Many studies have found that people who believe stress is harmful to their health are more likely to have health issues than those who don't. It's like they're convinced that stress is the poison in the box, but the truth is, it's all about perspective.

It's important to understand the difference between acute and chronic stress. Acute stress is like a caffeine boost; it's a normal and healthy response to sudden or unexpected events. But chronic stress, on the other hand, is like a caffeine overdose. It's prolonged and can have negative impacts on our physical and emotional health. It's like eating the whole box of chocolates—it's good at first, but then it becomes too much.

So, it's important to recognize the effects of stress and learn how to manage stress in order to avoid negative health outcomes. Stress management strategies such as mindfulness, exercise, and

relaxation techniques can help reduce the negative health impacts of stress and promote positive mental and physical health. And developing healthy coping skills and building strong social support networks can help reduce feelings of stress and promote a sense of well-being. Exercise, meditation, and positive self-talk can all help keep stress in check and improve our overall well-being. Taking time for self-care and doing activities that bring us joy can also help us stay resilient in the face of stress.

A recent study revealed that it looks like stress is not the villain it's made out to be. In fact, people who experienced a lot of stress but didn't view it as a bad thing had the lowest risk of dying.

Instead of giving people a guilt trip about stress, maybe it's time we teach them how to handle it in a healthy way.

But it appears that the belief that stress is bad for our health could be a real killer. The researchers estimated

that over the eight years of the study, 182,000 Americans died prematurely due to the belief that stress is bad for our health. This is a staggering statistic, and it raises questions about the value of telling people that stress is bad for their health. Instead of giving people a guilt trip about stress, maybe it's time we teach them how to handle it in a healthy way. By helping people handle stress in a healthier way, we might be able to reduce the number of premature deaths caused by the belief that stress is bad for our health.

To better understand how our minds are affected by stress, a study was conducted using a social stress test. Participants were instructed to give a five-minute impromptu speech on their weaknesses to a panel of expert evaluators. Think of it as public speaking on steroids. Bright lights and a camera were pointed at the participants to increase the feeling of pressure, and the evaluators were trained to give discouraging, nonverbal feedback, making it a real hot

seat. The second part of the study consisted of a math test during which the experimenter would harass the participants to complete the task faster, like a teacher on a caffeine binge. The results of the study showed that when the participants changed their mindset about stress, their body's physical stress response was changed significantly. This knowledge can help us better understand how to manage our stress levels and create a more resilient mindset, like a rubber band instead of a string.

When stress hits, our bodies respond in ways that can make us feel like we're losing control. The pounding heart, faster breathing, and sweating can make us feel anxious and fearful. But what if we could change our perspective and see those physical responses as helpful? Research from Harvard University suggests that it's possible to do just that. By viewing the signs of stress as a sign that our bodies are energizing and preparing us for action, we can become more confident and better equipped to tackle

challenges. Imagine your heart rate increasing as a sign that it's getting more oxygen to your brain and your breathing increasing as a sign that it's providing more energy and power. This shift in perspective can also lead to a *physical shift* in the body—instead of the heart rate increasing and blood vessels constricting, the heart rate decreases and blood vessels relax, allowing the body to handle stress better and perform better in challenging situations. So next time you feel the stress response kicking in, try to see it as a sign that you're ready to take on the world.

Health psychologists are no longer just focused on reducing stress but on helping people become better at managing it. By learning how to manage stress effectively, we can avoid the negative effects of chronic stress, such as cardiovascular disease. Simple interventions such as taking deep breaths, engaging in relaxation techniques, or doing things that bring joy can help reduce stress and improve overall health and well-being.

Let's take a look at how our bodies respond to stress, and then dive into some positive stories of individuals who overcame some very stressful situations.

The Physiological Changes of Stress

When a person experiences stress, their body goes through a series of physiological changes. These changes are triggered by the release of certain hormones and other chemicals in the body, including:

Adrenaline, also known as epinephrine, is a hormone released by the adrenal glands in response to stress. It plays a key role in the body's "fight or flight" response, preparing the body to respond to perceived threats or challenges.

Adrenaline can be beneficial in certain situations by providing a burst of energy and alertness. It increases heart rate, blood pressure, and blood sugar levels, diverts blood flow to the muscles, and improves

focus and concentration, which can help in situations such as lifting a car off of a loved one. It also helps to suppress pain and improve physical performance, making it useful in emergency situations or physical challenges.

However, when adrenaline is released in response to chronic stress, it can have negative effects on the body. Chronic exposure to high levels of adrenaline can lead to an increased risk of hypertension, heart disease, and other health problems. It can also contribute to anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues.

Adrenaline can also lead to the "freeze" response, which is a state of heightened awareness and immobility that can happen when the body is overwhelmed by stress. In this state, an individual may be paralyzed by fear and unable to take action. This can happen in situations such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or phobias.

While adrenaline can be beneficial in short-term stress situations, chronic exposure to high levels of adrenaline can have negative effects on both physical and mental health. It's important to learn how to manage stress in order to avoid the negative effects of chronic exposure to adrenaline.

Cortisol: This hormone is also released by the adrenal gland in response to stress. It helps to regulate blood sugar levels, blood pressure, and the body's metabolism. It also helps to suppress the immune system and reduce inflammation.

Cortisol has the potential to be your best friend and your worst enemy. It can be a superhero when it helps the body respond to stress and maintain balance. It's like Batman. It raises blood sugar levels, providing the body with the energy to fight stress like a superhero. It also helps to suppress the immune system and reduce inflammation, which can be helpful in cases of injury or infection.

However, when cortisol levels are chronically elevated due to prolonged stress, it turns into the villain of the story. High levels of cortisol can contribute to weight gain, insulin resistance, and other metabolic problems. It can also suppress the immune system, making the body more susceptible to infection and disease.

Prolonged exposure to high cortisol levels can also have negative effects on mental health, leading to symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and irritability. It can also lead to cognitive problems, such as memory and attention difficulties. It's like the Joker, and it can make you lose your mind.

Cortisol is an important hormone that helps the body respond to stress. Chronic exposure to high levels of cortisol can have negative effects on both physical and mental health. It's important to learn how to manage stress in order to avoid the negative effects of chronic exposure to cortisol and keep the superhero cortisol in check and the villain cortisol at bay.

Norepinephrine: This hormone is also released as part of the “fight or flight” response to stress, and it helps to increase heart rate, blood sugar levels, and blood pressure, providing the body with the energy and resources it needs to respond to stress. It also sharpens the senses and improves focus and concentration, helping an individual to stay alert and focused in a stressful situation. This, too, can be helpful in situations such as lifting a car to save someone, like Boyle did.

However, when norepinephrine levels are chronically elevated due to prolonged stress, it can have negative effects on the body. High levels of norepinephrine can contribute to anxiety, insomnia, and other mental health issues. It can also lead to physical symptoms such as headaches, high blood pressure, and heart palpitations.

Norepinephrine can also lead to a state of hyperarousal, where an individual becomes

overstimulated and overwhelmed by stress. This can cause an individual to become easily agitated, anxious, and even paranoid, leading to the point of inaction. This can be debilitating and can make it difficult for an individual to function in everyday life.

While norepinephrine is an important hormone that helps the body respond to stress, chronic exposure to high levels of norepinephrine can have negative effects on both physical and mental health. It's important to learn how to manage stress in order to avoid the negative effects of chronic exposure to norepinephrine.

Oxytocin: This hormone is released in response to social interaction and support. It helps to reduce the physical and emotional effects of stress.

Oxytocin is like the superhero of hormones, and it's the ultimate wingman in the

Oxytocin is the MVP of the hormone team.

stress response. It's released when we're stressed and helps regulate a variety of emotions and behaviors, like reducing stress, improving social interaction, and increasing empathy. It's also known as the "cuddle hormone" because it's released when we're physical with friends and family, and it helps foster close relationships. Oxytocin also helps to control aggression and fear, and it can even boost learning and memory. It's like a hormone jack of all trades.

This hormone is believed to be involved in many important physiological processes, such as pain relief, cardiovascular function, and even regulating appetite. It's like a personal hormone trainer.

In addition, oxytocin is believed to play a role in regulating mood and anxiety, making it a hormone therapy.

While oxytocin has been studied extensively, it's still not fully understood how it affects the body. But one thing is for sure, that it's an essential hormone that plays an important role in the stress response. It's

the MVP of the hormone team. It's like having a personal physician, therapist, and nutritionist all in one hormone.

Even though it's been studied extensively, scientists are still uncovering new ways in which oxytocin affects the body. But one thing is for sure: it's an essential hormone that plays a vital role in our stress response, making it a hormone superhero.

While caregiving for babies or elders can seem exhausting and carries with it plenty of stresses, there can be benefits to the caregiver as well. One study showed that those who spent time caring for others had absolutely no increased risk of death from stress, indicating that the harmful effects of stress are not inevitable. Oxytocin is often released while caregiving, especially when cuddling babies or holding the hand of an elder parent. Oxytocin is like a secret weapon against stress. Likewise, if you are the one needing care, the same applies. Developing a mindset of trust, courage, and resilience can help us to

better cope with stress, and connecting with others in times of stress can provide us with the social support we need to help us handle life's challenges.

This research highlights the importance of maintaining connections during times of stress and understanding our stress response as something that can be helpful in navigating life's toughest moments, like having stress-proof armor. By choosing to trust ourselves and turning to those around us, we can make stress into a source of strength and resilience. It's like stress is the ultimate workout for our emotional muscles, and social support is the protein shake.

Research has shown that our beliefs about stress play a crucial role in shaping our life experiences as well. The choices we make in life, such as between a stressful and a non-stressful job, should not be based solely on avoiding discomfort but rather on finding meaning and purpose. It is important to remember that the pursuit of meaning is more

beneficial for our health and well-being than the avoidance of stress.

The importance of being mindful of the decisions we make and understanding the power of our beliefs creates a healthier and more resilient life. Trusting ourselves and our abilities to handle stress and focusing on what brings us meaning and purpose is crucial. The choices we make and the beliefs we hold have the power to shape our lives and our well-being. It is up to us to make the most of that power and create a rich life of meaning, purpose, and resilience.

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Stress

When it comes to identifying healthy, normal stress and unhealthy, abnormal stress, the key is to pay attention to how you feel. Healthy normal stress should feel manageable and should not interfere with your daily life. Unhealthy, abnormal stress, on the other hand, can make it difficult to concentrate, disrupt

your daily routine, and lead to physical, mental, and emotional distress.

Healthy, normal stress can be defined as necessary to motivate us and helps us to reach our goals. It can be a source of motivation and can help us stay focused and productive. Unhealthy, abnormal stress, on the other hand, is a level of stress that is so high that it causes physical, mental, and emotional distress.

You can also identify healthy, everyday stress versus unhealthy abnormal stress by looking at the duration of the stress. Healthy, normal stress is typically short-term, while unhealthy, abnormal stress can last for extended periods of time.

Another way to determine healthy, normal stress and unhealthy, abnormal stress is by looking at the intensity of the stress. Healthy, normal stress should not be overwhelming, while unhealthy, abnormal stress can cause a person to feel

overwhelmed and out of control. Most often, the difference between healthy and unhealthy stress is found in how the stress is discharged. The energy generated by the hormones released as a result of a stressor needs to be consumed by the fight or flight response; otherwise, panic and terror are likely to overwhelm. With this understanding, let's consider that truly unhealthy stress occurs without a precipitous catalyst or at such an elevated level that you cannot engage in a fight or flight response. In such a situation, it is best to seek professional assistance.

The fight or flight response is an automatic, physiological reaction to a perceived threat or danger. It is a natural and instinctive response, which can be beneficial in the short term by enabling us to respond quickly and effectively to danger. The fight or flight response is also known as the stress response, as it is triggered by the release of stress hormones such as adrenaline, noradrenaline, and cortisol.

The fight or flight response is a form of protection and can be seen in all animals, including humans, who are faced with stressful situations. The response usually begins with the release of hormones such as adrenaline and noradrenaline, which increases heart rate and blood pressure, stimulates the release of glucose, and dilates the pupils. This prepares the body to respond to the perceived threat.

If we're running from a bear, the threat is real. But if we're in a less life-threatening situation, such as stress at the office, or a stressful family event, we need to tap into our inner thoughts and change the way we look at stress.

The Stockdale Paradox

The Dalai Lama once said, "Optimism does not mean being blind to the actual reality of a situation. It means maintaining a positive spirit to continue to seek a solution to any given problem. And it means

recognizing that any given situation has many different aspects, positive as well as problematic."

This statement perfectly encapsulates the essence of the Stockdale Paradox, which involves acknowledging the harsh realities of a situation while maintaining a sense of optimism and faith that one will ultimately prevail.

James Stockdale (1923-2005) was a United States Navy vice admiral, aviator, and Vietnam War veteran. He spent seven long years as a prisoner of war in the infamous Hanoi Hilton. He was born in Abingdon, Illinois, and raised in California. He attended the United States Naval Academy, where he graduated in 1947, and later earned a master's degree in international relations from Stanford University.

After his release from captivity in 1973, Stockdale continued his military career and became the president of the Naval War College. He retired from the Navy in 1979 and entered politics, serving as

the vice-presidential candidate alongside Ross Perot in the 1992 presidential election.

Stockdale was also a prolific author and wrote several books, including *Courage Under Fire*, a memoir of his experiences as a POW. He was widely respected for his bravery and leadership, and his legacy continues to inspire those who value perseverance and resilience in the face of adversity.

The Stockdale Paradox was exemplified by the Admiral during his imprisonment. And it serves as a powerful tool that emphasizes how important our way of thinking or reframing our perspective on stress and adverse situations can actually dictate our outcome. By balancing realism and optimism, we can acknowledge the challenges we face while maintaining a positive outlook and faith in our ability to overcome them. Applying this concept can help us manage stress more effectively and improve our well-being. He understood that it's all about how you manage your thoughts that will dictate your outcome.

Let's take a closer look at Stockdale's story.

The Reality of a Prisoner of War

During the Vietnam War, Stockdale was shot down while flying a combat mission over North Vietnam and was captured. He was held as a prisoner of war (POW), but he resisted his captors and became a symbol of resistance and resilience for his fellow POWs.

As a POW in Vietnam, James Stockdale endured extremely harsh and inhumane conditions. He was held captive for over seven years, during which time he was subjected to physical and psychological torture, as well as long periods of solitary confinement. Stockdale was initially held in a small, dark cell in the POW camp known as the "Hanoi Hilton." He was kept in leg irons and handcuffs for weeks at a time and was frequently beaten and tortured by his captors. He was often deprived of food and medical care and was forced to live in unsanitary and

cramped conditions. And yet, Stockdale became a symbol of resistance.

One of his most famous acts of defiance was cutting his own wrists, showing the enemy that he would rather die than tell them anything. While the enemy revived him, the act was credited with helping end the North Vietnamese use of excessive torture toward POWs.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of Stockdale's captivity was the long periods of solitary confinement that he endured. He was often kept in a small, windowless cell for months at a time, with little or no human contact. During these periods, he relied on his inner strength and mental discipline to keep himself sane and focused.

Stockdale was instrumental in organizing his fellow inmates. He invented an elaborate communication system so that isolated prisoners could feel connected. Stockdale realized that despite his capture and subsequent imprisonment, he still had the

capacity for free will. Although he couldn't change what was happening to him, he could control how he reacted to it all. And that's different from hoping things will turn out okay in the end. It is being proactive but also realistic about the situation. There are factors you *can* control, for instance, your reaction to imprisonment and torture.

Despite the extreme physical and psychological pressures he faced, Stockdale remained steadfast and resolute in his resistance to his captors. He became a symbol of hope and inspiration for his fellow POWs, and his bravery and leadership were widely admired and respected. A true hero, he was awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroic actions during this period.

The Paradox

The Stockdale Paradox refers to a mindset or approach to adversity that can help individuals and organizations cope with demanding situations. The

paradox is based on Stockdale's experience as a POW. According to Stockdale, the key to his survival was his ability to confront the brutal realities of his situation while maintaining hope for the future.

The paradox is summarized in two seemingly contradictory statements:

1. "You must retain faith that you will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties."

2. "You must confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."

In his book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins popularized the concept of the Stockdale Paradox. The

*Hope for the best
while acknowledging
and preparing for the
worst.*

Paradox suggests that one must balance realism with optimism to achieve success, and it was a

key factor that helped Stockdale survive seven years in captivity. This approach involves confronting the harsh realities of one's situation while maintaining

faith that they will ultimately prevail. Let's explore the concept of the Stockdale Paradox and compare it to the idea of reframing stress, and how these concepts can be applied to achieve success and overcome difficult obstacles. The Stockdale Paradox is a concept that takes some linguistic mental gymnastics to fully grasp. At its core, the paradox involves the idea of hoping for the best while acknowledging and preparing for the worst. This contradictory way of thinking was the strength that led James Stockdale through those trying years, and it has been one of the defining philosophies for great leaders making it through hardship and reaching their goals.

In a discussion with Collins for his book, Stockdale speaks about how the optimists fared in prisoner of war camp. The dialogue goes:

"Who didn't make it out?"

"Oh, that's easy," he said. "The optimists."

"The optimists? I don't understand," I said, now completely confused, given what he'd said a hundred meters earlier.

"The optimists. Oh, they were the ones who said, 'We're going to be out by Christmas.' And Christmas would come, and Christmas would go. Then they'd say, 'We're going to be out by Easter.' And Easter would come, and Easter would go. And then Thanksgiving, and then it would be Christmas again. And they died of a broken heart.

"I never lost faith in the end of the story. I never doubted not only that I would get out, but also that I would prevail in the end and turn the experience into the defining event of my life, which in retrospect, I would not trade..."

This anecdote illustrates the dangers of unbridled optimism and positivity. While it's essential to maintain a positive outlook, it's equally important to confront the brutal realities of one's situation and to prepare for the worst-case scenario.

Applying the Stockdale Paradox

Applying the Stockdale Paradox to daily life involves learning to embrace both positive and negative feelings and realizing that they're interconnected. It's not about choosing which side to take, but instead learning to balance both feelings and recognizing that they're both necessary for success.

On a higher level, the Stockdale Paradox is also applicable to business leadership and management. This duality helps guard against the onslaught of disappointments that will hit you in the business world. Optimism may drive innovation, but it needs to be put in check to ensure that you're still

grounded in reality and not naively pursuing something that can't happen.

The Stockdale Paradox can help organizations assess a current situation and plan accordingly to tackle the challenges they come across. It enforces both the idea that you can be positive and believe you will overcome all difficulties while at the same time confronting the most brutal facts of your current situation.

The Stockdale Paradox is the idea of balancing optimism and realism in a challenging situation. It means acknowledging the reality of a difficult situation while still having the faith and belief that you will overcome it. This concept can be applied to many areas of life, including dealing with stress.

When faced with stress, it is essential to acknowledge the reality of the situation. Don't sugarcoat it or deny it. Accept that it is happening, and it is causing you

When faced with stress, it is essential to acknowledge the reality of the situation.

distress. This acknowledgement will help you face the situation head-on and come up with a plan to deal with it.

At the same time, it is crucial to maintain a positive outlook and have faith that you will overcome the stress. This positivity will help you stay motivated and focused on finding solutions. It will also help you maintain your mental health and well-being.

For example, suppose you are facing a stressful situation at work, such as a looming deadline for an important project. Applying the Stockdale Paradox, you would acknowledge that the situation is challenging and causing you stress. However, you

would also maintain a positive attitude and have faith in your abilities to meet the deadline.

To implement the Stockdale Paradox, you can try the following steps:

1. Acknowledge the reality of the situation and its challenges. Don't ignore or deny the stress you are experiencing.
2. Reframe your mindset and maintain a positive attitude. Focus on what you can control and believe in your ability to overcome the challenge.
3. Take action to address the stress. Identify practical steps you can take to manage the situation and work towards a solution.

Reframing

How you choose to think about your situation is a concept that can be used in tandem with the Stockdale Paradox. Reframing or changing the way

you think about stress involves changing one's perspective on stress and recognizing that it can be beneficial in certain situations. This approach involves acknowledging the physiological and psychological responses to stress and learning to channel them in a positive direction.

The Stockdale Paradox and reframing stress are two concepts that share a common thread of balancing optimism with realism.

1. The Stockdale Paradox can be applied to dealing with stress by acknowledging the reality of the situation, accepting the stress it causes, and maintaining a positive outlook that you will overcome it. In other words, it involves confronting the brutal facts of the stressor while remaining optimistic and resilient.

2. Reframing stress involves changing your mindset about stress and seeing it as a challenge rather than a threat. This

approach involves recognizing that stress can be beneficial in certain situations, such as motivating you to take action, improving your focus and performance, and building resilience.

Both the Stockdale Paradox and reframing stress involve accepting the reality of a situation while maintaining a positive outlook. By reframing stress, you can use the stressor as a motivator and channel it in a positive direction, while the Stockdale Paradox can help you confront the challenges head-on and maintain hope for a positive outcome.

In essence, the Stockdale Paradox and reframing stress complement each other by helping individuals develop a balanced and resilient mindset that enables them to face challenges and overcome them.

Conclusion

Stress is a given in our lives. No matter how you try to avoid it, it will find you. While it is different for every person, we can all benefit from realizing it for what is and adjusting our perception of it. This will not only give us a happier present but will benefit both our health and our mental well-being in the future.

**ALMOST THE END! YOU STILL NEED TO
COMPLETE THE 7-DAY CHALLENGE**

7-Day Stress Challenge

Why Accept this Challenge?

There are five main reasons to accept this 7-Day Challenge, particularly one presented by the author of a book you are reading:

- 1. Personal growth:** By taking on a challenge, you can push yourself to learn and develop new skills, which can help you grow both personally and professionally.
- 2. Improved performance:** A challenge can motivate you to improve your performance and

achieve better results, which can benefit both you and your organization.

3. Increased insight: A challenge can force you to focus your attention on a specific area, leading to deeper understanding and greater insight. This can help you make more informed decisions and drive innovation in your organization.

4. Satisfaction of fulfilling a challenging task: Successfully completing a challenge can give you a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction that comes from overcoming obstacles and achieving a difficult goal. This can boost your confidence and inspire you to take on new challenges in the future.

5. Mastering the Secret of Desire: By applying yourself to these challenges you will complete the journey of discovery that is the promise of this book.

In the case of a challenge presented by the author of a book you are reading, accepting the challenge can also provide a unique opportunity to learn from an expert in the field and apply the insights and strategies presented in the book to real-world scenarios. This can help you deepen your understanding of the material and enhance your ability to apply it in your own work.

Day 1: Monday - Embrace Stress

On the first day, accept that stress is a natural part of life. Instead of fearing it, view it as a superpower that can help you achieve your goals. When you feel stressed, please take a deep breath and remind yourself that it's normal and can actually help you perform better.

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Day 2: Tuesday - Shift Your Perspective

On the second day, work on shifting your perspective about stress. When you feel stressed, remind yourself that it's a sign that your body is energizing and preparing you for action. Embrace the extra boost of adrenaline and use it to push yourself forward.

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Day 3: Wednesday - Practice Mindfulness

On the third day, practice mindfulness to help manage stress. Take a few minutes to focus on your breath and clear your mind. When you feel stress creeping in, take a mindful pause to help you respond in a more thoughtful way.

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Day 4: Thursday - Exercise

On the fourth day, use exercise to help manage stress. Exercise can help reduce stress hormones in the body and boost mood. Choose an activity you enjoy, such as walking, running, or yoga, and make it a part of your routine.

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Day 5: Friday - Connect with Others

On the fifth day, focus on building social connections to help manage stress. Spend time with friends and family, or join a community group or club. Social support can help reduce stress and promote overall well-being.

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Day 6: Saturday - Engage in Self-Care

On the sixth day, engage in self-care activities that bring you joy. This could be anything from taking a bubble bath to reading a good book to indulging in your favorite hobby. Taking time for self-care can help reduce stress and promote relaxation.

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Day 7: Sunday - Contemplate

On the seventh day, take time to reflect on your relationship with stress. Think about how you've been managing stress in your life and consider ways to continue using stress in a positive way. Contemplate the ways you've shifted your perspective and how it has affected your overall well-being. Take time to rest and recharge before the start of a new week.

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Navy Rear Adm. James B. Stockdale poses for a photograph in full dress white uniform. He is one of the most highly decorated officers in the history of the Navy and wears 26 personal combat decorations, including two Distinguished Flying Crosses, three Distinguished Service Medals, two Purple Hearts and four Silver Star medals in addition to the Medal of Honor. Later, he obtained the rank of vice admiral.

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About The Author

Wes Berry is a Keynote Speaker and Workshop provider with the professional skills and real-life experience to deliver on any stage. He is a keynote speaker and a workshop facilitator who works with Fortune 500 companies like Johnson & Johnson to businesses and associations of all sizes seeking a breakthrough experience. Wes changes lives and transforms organizations by delivering a Paradigm Shift. He has written sixteen business and success books as a TEDx Speaker and a *Wall Street Journal* best-selling author. As an entrepreneur, he built a \$750 million international company that operated in 130 countries.

His business knowledge and communications skills have made him an expert media contributor on many topics, from commercial drone applications to the downsizing of Sears, resulting in appearances with

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