



# Rifka Schonfeld **STRATEGIES**

THE NEWSLETTER FOR OPTIMUM SUCCESS

TIPS ON SOCIAL SKILLS FOR ADULTS & CHILDREN

## Can Stress Be Killing Me?

Dear Readers,

This week's newsletter will discuss the topic of stress. Need we say more?

Rifka Schonfeld  
**STRATEGIES**

### QUESTION:

I feel like stress is killing me. Do you have any tips on how to combat it? I don't want it to take over my life.



STRATEGIES FOR OPTIMUM SUCCESS  
*Rifka Schonfeld*

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DOES YOUR CHILD FEEL UNACCEPTED?  
**THAT LIFE IS UNFAIR?** THAT HE  
MAKES LITTLE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD? THAT  
HE LACKS THE ABILITY TO LAUGH AT HIS  
MISTAKES? THAT HE'S  
**CONSTANTLY OUT OF  
CONTROL?**

THE  
**POWER**  
OF  
**MINDSETS**  
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**DR. ROBERT BROOKS**

Dr. Robert Brooks is a psychologist on the faculty of Harvard Medical School. He has lectured nationally and internationally and written extensively about the themes of resilience, parenting, family relationships, school climate, and balancing our personal and professional lives. He is the author or co-author of 17 books including *Raising Resilient Children* and *Seven Steps to Improve Your Child's Social Skills*.

TUESDAY

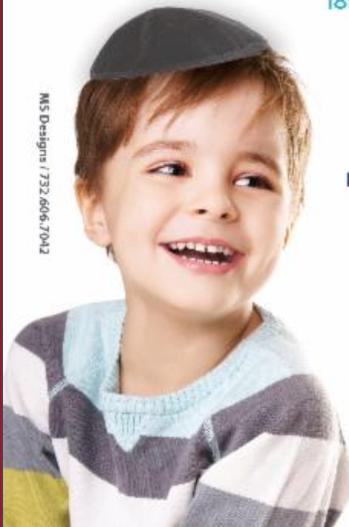
**NOV. 13. 2018**

8:30AM-4:30PM

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EARLY-BIRD SPECIAL BEFORE MARCH 2, 2018

**YOU WILL LEARN ABOUT:**

- > A **mindset theory** that incorporates social, emotional well-being as well as academic achievement.
- > **Negative mindset** that burdens many students with ADHD.
- > The most essential factors and strategies to **nurture resilience in students with ADHD**.
- > Reflecting upon the **theory of motivation** that guides your work
- > **Creating a motivating environment** that promotes learning, responsibility and hope.
- > A **strength-based approach** in which each student's "islands of competence" are identified and reinforced.

*Rifka Schonfeld*  
**STRATEGIES**

**ANSWER:**

*It's two o'clock in the morning and you're lying in bed. You have something immensely important and challenging to do that next day – a critical meeting, a presentation, an exam. You have to get a decent night's rest, but you're still wide awake. You try different strategies for relaxing – take deep, slow breaths, try to imagine restful mountain scenery – but instead you keep thinking that unless you fall asleep in the next minute, your career is finished. Thus you lie there, more tense by the second.*

I think most people can relate in some way to the situation that Robert M. Sapolsky

describes at the very beginning of his book, *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers: The Acclaimed Guide to Stress, Stress-Related Diseases, and Coping*. Who doesn't occasionally have trouble sleeping because stress is somehow keeping our mind running?

Whereas the chief killers at the beginning of the twentieth century were tuberculosis, pneumonia, the flu, and childbirth, today, medical advances have ensured that those diseases (or natural processes like childbirth) are rarely fatal. So, what's affecting us today? Sapolsky argues that our heart disease, adult-onset diabetes, Alzheimers, and even cancer might be caused by stress.

### ***Can Stress Truly Be Killing Us?***

When all is going well, humans live in a state of homeostasis, in other words, an ideal body temperature, an ideal level of glucose in the bloodstream, and everything else in balance. When faced with stress, our body pumps out adrenaline and other hormones to give you the energy that is need to overcome that stress. You shut off the inessentials like digestion and your body focuses everything on that short-term crisis. This was great when it was because you accidentally bumped into a lion or need to navigate an overflowing river. It's not so wonderful when your blood pressure rises when you are stuck in traffic or taking an important test.

And studies show that the more your body responds to stress (like it has evolved to do), the more damage we do to our systems. We can damage our cardiovascular system by increasing our blood pressure, we can impair our long-term memory by weakening the connection between our neurons, and we can delete our dopamine stores (the neurotransmitter responsible for feelings of happiness) and therefore become depressed. Lastly, you can damage your frontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for making decisions, and your judgment can fly out the window.

### ***Living with Stress***

We cannot change our biology, but there are certain things that we can control in our responses to stress. Below, I have outlined Sapolsky's suggestions of how to better cope with stress and live a happier (and healthier!) life.

*Surround yourself with friends.* When studying animals that were subject to minor stressful events, those animals developed ulcers if left to handle the stress alone. However, if those animals had "friends" or companions who they had enjoyed being around before the stressful events and were able to be around them after the stressful events, the animals did not develop ulcers. Bottom line: keep your friends around you during times of crisis.

*If you can, attempt to prepare.* If the stress is something that you can prepare for, it will give you a sense of control. And, not surprisingly, if you are preparing for the stress, your body will not have the same reaction. So, if you are aware that you will encounter a stressful situation, preparing for it in any way can ultimately prevent your body from jumping into high gear.

*Find a distraction.* When your body remains in a high state of stress for prolonged periods, the damage to your heart, digestion, and brain can be significant. Therefore, find a hobby or something else that can take your mind off of the stress. Not only will you temporarily stop thinking about the stress, your body will stop exhibiting the stress response.

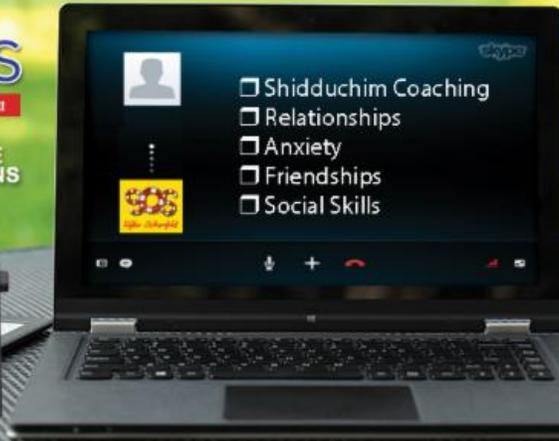
For more stress tips, you can also join my six-week anxiety workshop!

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