



Stress Management

This leaflets aims to help you understand
how stress can affect you and how to
manage the situation



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Ideas for coping with stress

■ Understand more about stress

Recognise your major sources of stress at present.
Understand how stress affects you.
Anticipate and plan for periods of stress.
Find your optimal level - not too much not too little.

■ Adopt a systematic problem solving approach

Define your problem specifically –try to be objective.
Break it down into manageable components.
Approach projects one stage at a time.
Develop, evaluate and execute a course of action.

■ Recognise and accept your own feelings

Express the way you are feeling openly with others.
Accept your feelings.

■ Develop new effective behavioural skills

Be assertive –learn to say ‘No’.
Avoid procrastination. ‘Do it today!’.
Manage your time effectively.
Practise rational thinking.

■ Establish and make use of a good social support network

Ask for help and accept it when offered.
Deliberately cultivate good relationships.
Talk to people; family, old friends, new friends

■ Maintain a healthy lifestyle

Take regular physical exercise.
Maintain a healthy balanced diet.
Deliberately seek out change of pace, and new activities in your life.

■ Make time to relax and enjoy yourself

Set aside time each day to do something you enjoy.
Plan breaks; Lunch breaks, weekends, holidays.
Develop hobbies and recreational activities.

■ Set aside time for reflection and spiritual development

Set aside time for reflection and meditation.
Reassess your values.
What is really important in your life?



Goal Planning

The importance of goal planning

1. Human beings are goal directed creatures striving for meaning, significance and purpose. A lack of achievable goals results in stress and tension.
2. In the study of the psychology of achievement, almost all successful people have one thing in common; they work towards set goals.
3. Setting and working towards goals increases motivation and releases an enormous store of energy.
4. In studies of survivors of stressful environments, such as concentration camps and prisons, those best equipped to survive were those who had or could create goals to work towards.

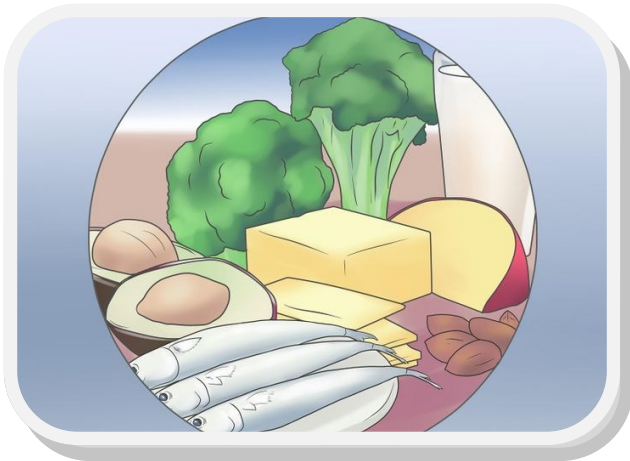
Why don't people set goals?

1. Because they don't realise the importance of setting goals. It is amazing that given the importance of the skill of goal planning, it is a subject rarely taught in schools.
2. People might not set goals because they don't know how to.
3. People often don't set goals because of a deep seated 'fear of failure'. Once a goal is set, you either succeed or fail to achieve it.

Why goals should be written down and made specific

1. Writing a goal down makes it visible, obvious, concrete and specific. There it is in front of you. This has the effect of waking up the unconscious and releasing energy.
2. Writing a goal down entails a commitment. If you don't write it down, you can always say to yourself, 'I never really meant to do that anyway', and you leave your options open. Writing goals down challenges procrastination.

Regular exercise and a balanced diet



Five reasons to take regular exercise

1. Exercise provides a way of releasing a great deal of muscle tension, and accumulated adrenaline, which are the results of high levels of stress. Exercise is a relaxant.
2. Exercise maintains good circulation, lowers blood pressure, and improves the body's immune system in its constant fight to ward off disease.
3. Exercise improves self image, appearance and control of weight.
4. Exercise can be used to clear the mind of the clutter of worrying thoughts and anxiety.
5. Hormones are released during exercise; these act as natural antidepressants (endomorphines).

Five pointers to a well-balanced diet

1. Avoid too much fat, especially saturated fats with high cholesterol levels. Grill, bake or boil rather than fry. Similarly, avoid too much sugar, salt and excessive amounts of caffeine (contained in tea, coffee, chocolate and cola). Caffeine is a stimulant which has a direct effect on the nervous system.
2. Eat foods with adequate starch or fibre (roughage), such as bran, fresh vegetables and fruit. Eat fresh foods.
3. Try not to exceed the recommended weekly alcohol intake levels; 14 units for men and 14 units for women. One unit is equivalent to one pub measure of spirits, or a glass of wine or half a pint of beer.
4. Smoking damages your health and your long term ability to cope with stress.
5. Bear in mind the age-old adage; 'Moderation in all things'.

Understanding Type A behaviour

What is Type A behaviour?

Two American cardiologists, Friedman and Rosenman noticed that a great many of the people they saw with coronary heart disease and strokes tended to be of a similar nature, and were likely to be rather difficult to rehabilitate, as they did not find it easy to adjust their lifestyle.

They initiated research into what is now known as Type A behaviour.

Type A behaviour is characterised by a cluster of traits:

1. An overriding need to achieve/high competition instincts;
2. An intense sense of time urgency/hurry sickness;
3. Inappropriate hostility and aggression if progress is impeded;
4. Inability to relax;
5. A tendency to deny feeling tired or fatigued

Type B behaviour, is on the other hand, the exact opposite, the individual being characterised by being more relaxed, less hurried and less inclined to compete.



Type A behaviour and your health

A number of research studies have indicated that individuals who score highly on Type A behaviour have double the risk of heart disease compared with those who are classified as having low Type A scores or Type B behaviour.

This is independent of other traditional risk factors such as blood pressure, serum cholesterol, smoking and age. Type A behaviour is also associated with other stress related conditions such as stomach ulcers, allergies, the exaggerated response of the sympathetic nervous system to stress ('fight or flight' response) and poor levels of mental health (anxiety and depressions).

Type A behaviour also seems to be linked with high levels of success in career and financial terms.

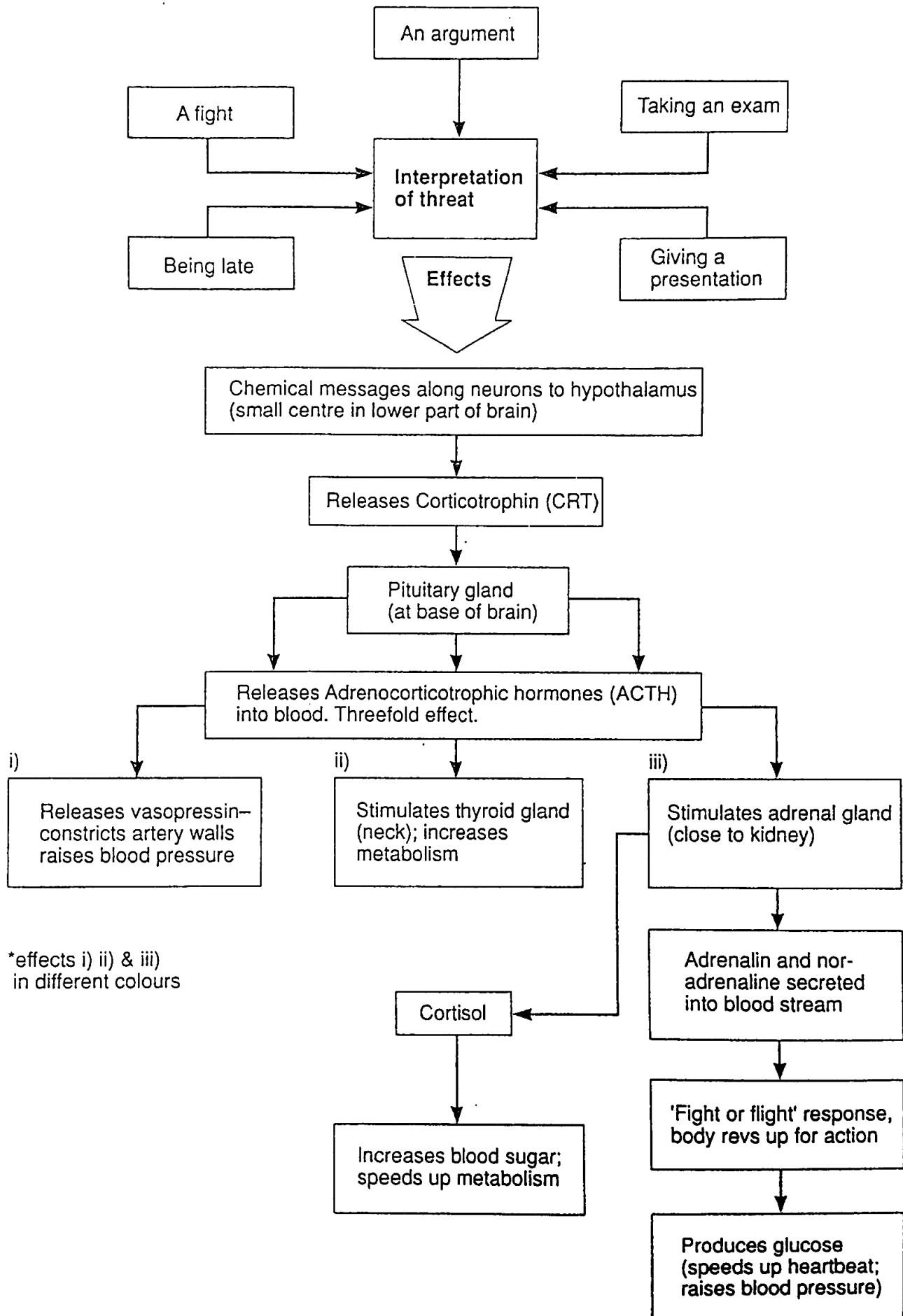
Physiology of Type A behaviour

The underlying physiology of Type A behaviour leads to excessive discharge of the stress hormones—noradrenaline, adrenaline and cortisol—and one result is an excess of insulin in the bloodstream.

This can mean that it can take three or four times longer than normal to get rid of dietary cholesterol after meals. A potential result is a narrowing of blood vessels, together with increased deposits of clotting elements in the blood.

Research indicates that, with the right intervention, people can manage their Type A behaviour effectively, reducing the risks of physical and mental ill-health without impairing their performance.

The chemistry of stress



Stress control

Stress is the result of an imbalance between the demands made on us and our personal resources to deal with these demands.

The balance between a person's resources and the demands being made on them can be compared with a bank account.

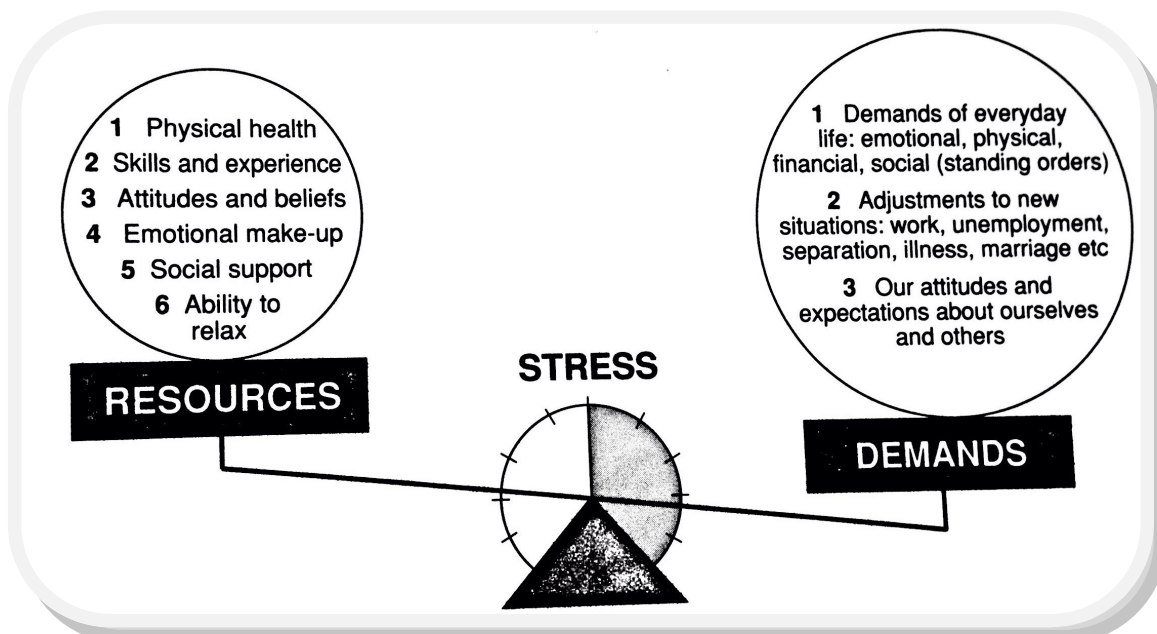
If too many demands are made on the account, we go into the 'red' and become overdrawn, which is comparable to being under stress.

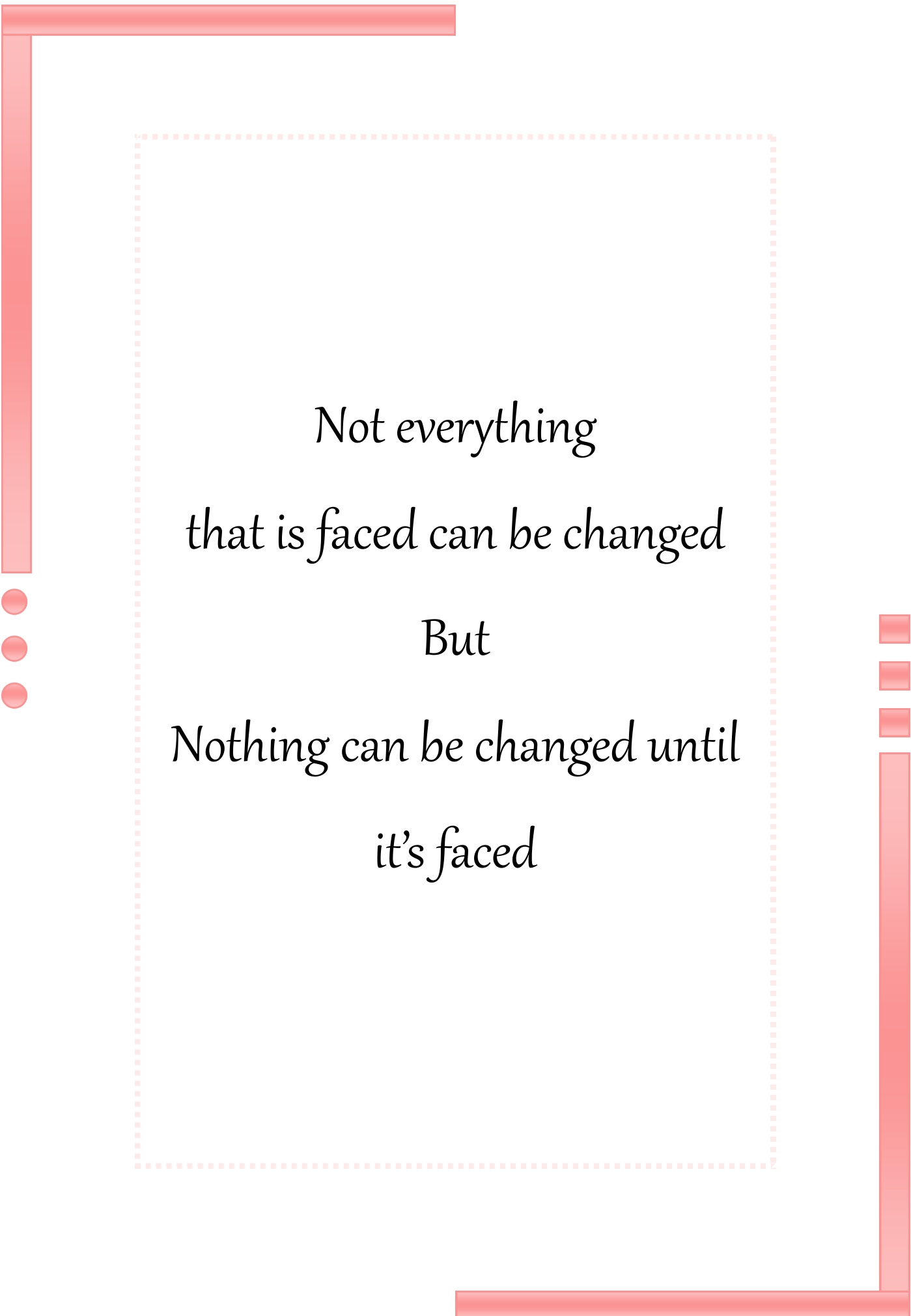
In normal circumstances we can cope with the everyday demands of life such as maintenance of a job and relationships, which is comparable with the way routine standing orders regularly diminish our financial account.

It is only when extra stresses or demands come along that we can tip over 'into the red'. Sometimes a crisis may be the result of a 'last straw' which just tips the balance and we fall 'into the red' or stress.

Recommendations

1. Some stress is good for you. Identify your own resources and situations which you find stressful. Learn to identify your own optimal level of stress and do not be pressurised beyond it.
2. Anticipate stress by balancing your demands and resources in advance. Decide what is important— have priorities.
3. When experiencing stress make sure that you:
 - Do not withdraw from social support
 - Keep communicating-ventilate your feelings
 - Keep areas and times for relaxation
4. Reduce demands:
 - Do not expect too much of yourself
 - Do not feel that you have to live up to others' expectations of you
 - Think twice about how important tasks are. Try saying 'No'
 - Break your goals down into manageable proportions
 - Think positively about your abilities.





Not everything
that is faced can be changed

But
Nothing can be changed until
it's faced

For those in doubt

Have confidence in yourself to do
what you think is right.

Fear not what others might say.

Press ahead with determination and dignity.

Strive with all the energy you have.

Ignore criticism from those who cannot see.

Have the strength to pursue your vision
and in the end you will achieve your goal.

For what is right will succeed.

It is then that others will learn from what you have
done and make it all worthwhile.

Look within,
and listen to your heart,
you can do it.
You can reach your goal.
You can make that new reality
instead of accepting things
the way they used to be.

You can do it

All of your highest hopes are with you.
Nothing will hold you back but your own fears,
and if those fears were created
by you, they can be
dealt with by you,
and said good - bye to.

You can do it

Say it to yourself, and believe it
in your heart.
Make every single day
a positive start
leading to a better and
brighter tomorrow.

You can do it

You really can

I AM EQUAL

I have the right to express my feelings

I have the right to express my opinions and beliefs

I have the right to change my mind

I have the right to say 'I don't understand'

I have the right to decline responsibility for other
peoples problems

I have the right to make reasonable requests of others

I have the right to be listened to and taken seriously

I have the right to make mistakes and feel comfortable about
admitting to them

I have the right to be illogical in making decisions

I have the right to say 'I don't care'

I have the right to be miserable or cheerful

