

Stress Pandemic: The Lifestyle Solution

Paul Hujich

Mwella Publishing (Jul 1, 2012)

Softcover \$16.95 (288pp)

978-0-615-48920-9

Anyone who's been in a traffic jam for even a few minutes can feel the effects of a stress level surge, but what happens when that edginess and tension linger throughout the day? Author Paul Hujich (*Betrayal of Love and Freedom*) knows firsthand the destruction of continual stress, and in this insightful guide, he provides numerous strategies to help others tame that beast.

As a cofounder of a pioneering organic foods company, Hujich led his company to impressive success, but he ground himself down in the process. Finally, diagnosed with bipolar disorder as a result of unresolved stress, he experienced a nervous breakdown and became a ward of the state. In his subsequent search for prevention tactics, he delved into research on the topic and spoke with specialists who described the reach of the "stress pandemic." He writes, "The world today has become a bit of a bullying place, with stress lurking around every corner ... Ultimately, it is up to us to take responsibility for our way of life, our stress, and our well-being."

Many of Hujich's prescriptions are familiar fodder for lifestyle magazines: eat better, get more sleep, exercise regularly, and meditate. But others are more tricky, including saying no to commitments that don't honor our "abiding sense of contentment," and recognizing harmful behavior patterns that become emotional addictions rather than coping mechanisms.

Hujich artfully delves into these complicated theories and delivers simplified, useful guidance with practical steps toward achieving a more stress-free life. Even with the advice that's almost well-worn by now, Hujich's persuasive writing style and conversational tone makes the material sound fresher. Reminders to eat a more nutritious diet and to sleep enough are always valuable, and his approach makes the suggestions sound friendly instead of bossy.

Particularly valuable is the lengthy description of his own experience with stress, "to serve as a deterrent and a warning to those who are at risk of prolonged, severe stress levels." Coming just after the measured, sound advice on stress reduction, Hujich's story takes on more significance, and its tone stands in stark contrast to that of the calm advisor he seems to be now. His painful story shows that anyone can be struck down by accumulated stress, but, as he also demonstrates, awareness and prevention can be powerful tools for wellness.

ELIZABETH MILLARD (Fall 2012)

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