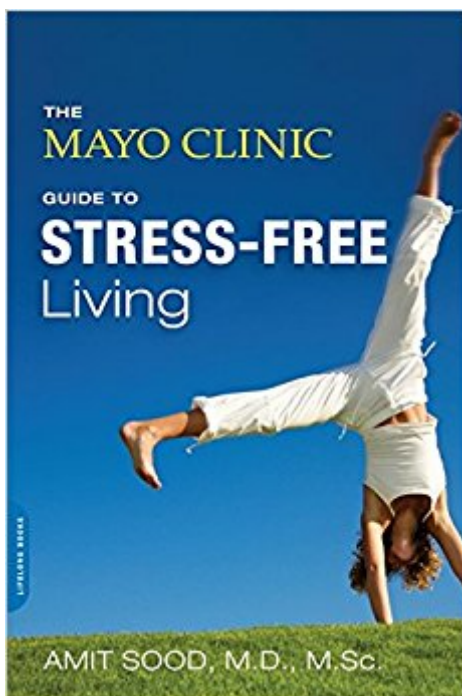


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# The Mayo Clinic Guide To Stress-Free Living



## Synopsis

Have you ever driven several miles without noticing anything on the road, or read a page in a book without registering any of it? Do the day's worries and disappointments crowd your mind as you're trying to fall asleep at night? Do you feel stressed much of the time and aren't sure how to find peace? In this book, Amit Sood, M.D., M.Sc., a Mayo Clinic specialist in stress and resiliency, reveals how the mind's instinctive restlessness and shortsightedness generate stress and anxiety and presents strategies for living a more peaceful life. The book is based on the highly popular stress management program offered at Mayo Clinic that Dr. Sood developed after two decades of work with tens of thousands of people. Drawing on groundbreaking brain research, Dr. Sood helps you understand the brain's two modes and how an imbalance between them produces unwanted stress. From this basis, you learn skills that will help you: Develop deep and sustained attention Practice gratitude, compassion and acceptance Live a meaningful life Cultivate nurturing relationships Achieve your highest potential All of these concepts are weaved into a practical and fun journey that has been tested in numerous scientific studies, with consistently positive results. Take the first step to discover greater peace and joy for you and your loved ones. "Dr. Sood has put together a simple, secular and structured program that is anchored in science, is free of rituals and dogmas, and is accessible to everyone. This book can change your life."--Dr. Andrew Weil "An important innovative approach to well-being, one we all should know about."--Dr. Daniel Goleman

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## Customer Reviews

This practical, can-do guide, written by a positive-energy medical doctor at the Mayo Clinic, offers

clear steps to take to decrease the bad kind of stress. As Sood notes, "Good stress motivates you, preps you for a challenge and gives you extra pep. Bad stress is caused by excessive workload, lack of control, and lack of meaning. To cope with negative pressure, Sood highlights the principles of stress-free living: gratitude, compassion, acceptance, higher meaning, and forgiveness. Each principle gets a chapter. So do "tribe" (family and friends) and "relaxation and reflection." Sood also provides his "seven-point program for increasing energy": eating healthy food, sleeping seven to eight hours a day, keeping company with good people, avoiding news overdoses, following an exercise routine, doing something meaningful each day, and thinking good thoughts for others. Just reading Sood's lucid, commonsensical recommendations is a start to eliminating negative stress. --Karen Springen

"Dr. Sood has put together a simple, secular and structured program that is anchored in science, is free of rituals and dogmas, and is accessible to everyone. This book can change your life."--Dr. Andrew Weil  
"An important innovative approach to well-being, one we all should know about."--Dr. Daniel Goleman  
Booklist, 1/1/2014; This practical, can-do guide, written by a positive-energy medical doctor at the Mayo Clinic, offers clear steps to take to decrease the bad kind of stress; Just reading Sood's lucid, commonsensical recommendations is a start to eliminating negative stress.  
Taste for Life, February 2014; Offers an innovative approach to mindfulness and well-being.  
Chatelaine.com ; 10 Best Health Books of 2014, 2/3/14  
Spirituality & Practice, 3/1/2014; Dr. Sood has come up with a rather amazing affirmation of a contented life.  
Taste for Life, May 2014; Dr. Sood offers simple solutions to relieving stress in our day-to-day problems; This 10-part guide can help readers find peace and achieve their goals toward creating a healthier and happier life.

I just finished reading "The Mayo Clinic Guide to Stress-Free Living." It was not your run-of-the-mill self-help book. While other books have offered to help me meditate, reduce stress, or become healthier, most of them required me to steal large amounts of time from my very busy day. While I know I need to make changes in my life, current obligations don't allow me the time (or the finances) to step out of life and meditate for hours a day. Dr. Sood's approach is different. Rather than remove ourselves from our daily issues, he asks us to use them as opportunities to get out of "default mode", focus joyfully on the present, re-frame our

interpretations, and find ways to be grateful for what we have. This well-researched book discusses why our minds wander, why we tend to dwell on the negative, how that affects our life, and what we can do about it. I found the book simple to understand. However, please don't mistake simple for easy. Many of us have spent years becoming who we are. It may take us years to become who we want to be. If true, that person will be years away until we actually start the work of becoming. Dr. Sood's simple exercises and practices made it easy to start right away and simple enough to integrate into my everyday life. This book is absolutely full of useful insights. However, I think the biggest lesson I learned from reading "The Mayo Clinic Guide to Stress-Free Living" is that the most important emotions are gratitude and compassion. Focusing on them doesn't mean you cannot strive to improve yourself or your situation. Far from it. Instead, it means you should be kind to yourself and those around you. Enjoy the journey as much as the objective. If you only focus on what you don't have, you will miss so many opportunities to enjoy life and people along the way. Dr. Sood's comfortable writing style and warm voice make the book enjoyable to read. The organization of the materials and the excellent table of contents make it easy to refer back to exercises or concepts later. I would, and have, recommend this book to anyone who is struggling with stress, pain, loss, health concerns, or is just looking for direction.

I was introduced to this book by a friend who thought I would enjoy reading it. My first reaction was, "I already know a lot of ways to relax. I doubt there will be anything new that I haven't already heard." However, I soon discovered that this book on stress was different. Instead of teaching about different relaxation methods, Dr. Sood takes the latest research from neuroscience, effective principles and practices from psychology, and wisdom from a variety of spiritual teachings then insightfully melds it all into a user-friendly daily practice that builds resiliency and fosters good mental health. As the back cover says, "you learn skills that will help you develop deep and sustained attention, practice gratitude, compassion and acceptance, live a meaningful life, cultivate nurturing relationships, and achieve your highest potential." There are many components of this book that I particularly liked. First, I found the latest research on brain information to be very compelling, and I appreciated learning how our minds operate either in "default mode" or "focused mode." After reading about this in the book, I began more carefully considering what my brain attends to, how and why it interprets what it attends to, AND how I can impact my attention. Understanding the evolution and function of

brain and mind seems critical to creating the world we live in individually and collectively, and Dr. Sood's explanation of recent research shines new light on why we tend to function the way we do, as well as how we can make changes for the better. Secondly, Dr. Sood's suggestions on ways to practice living with gratitude, compassion, forgiveness, acceptance, and higher meaning were straightforward and manageable for most anyone's schedule. I found that practicing these simple principles daily is a hugely helpful mental health habit. And, if my mind falls into a "black hole" a rumination about past or future I can use either kind attention or joyful attention strategies (as discussed in the book) to help move out of it. Lastly, the fact that this book does not promote one religion over another allows anyone to be open to learning the material in Stress-Free Living. Dr. Sood has uncovered the key ingredients found in the wisdom of any religion and has attached concrete behaviors to foster these ingredients in one's self. This book is a modern day owner's manual for humanity, and not only do I highly recommend reading it, I hope every person does!

I enjoyed this book immensely. Written by a physician who specializes in integrative medicine, Sood has a lot of wisdom to espouse on work-life balance, the power of meditation, and the power of forgiveness. I enjoyed the idea of having a virtuous "theme" for each day - one day a week focusing especially on gratitude, one for compassion, etc. In a world where it is so easy to be drawn inward - to retreat to our houses, our electronic devices, ourselves - Sood emphasizes the importance of reaching out, of learning about the world around us and the people around us, and maintaining a sense of community. There is a lot of very specific and helpful advice in this book - solely reading it will not change much, but taking it to heart and making a conscientious effort to actively pursue these principles will. This book isn't a panacea to stress-free living, but I do think that heeding the advice in this book is likely to lead to a sense of fulfillment, a calm demeanor, and an overall more 'full' life.

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