

A hamster is running on a wire exercise wheel. The wheel is made of a circular frame with many thin, horizontal bars. The hamster is positioned in the center of the wheel, facing right. The background is a solid, muted blue-grey color. The overall image has a slightly desaturated, artistic feel.

*How to build mental strenght
when life is stressful?*

Linda T. Sørensen

What is stress? And what is mental strength?

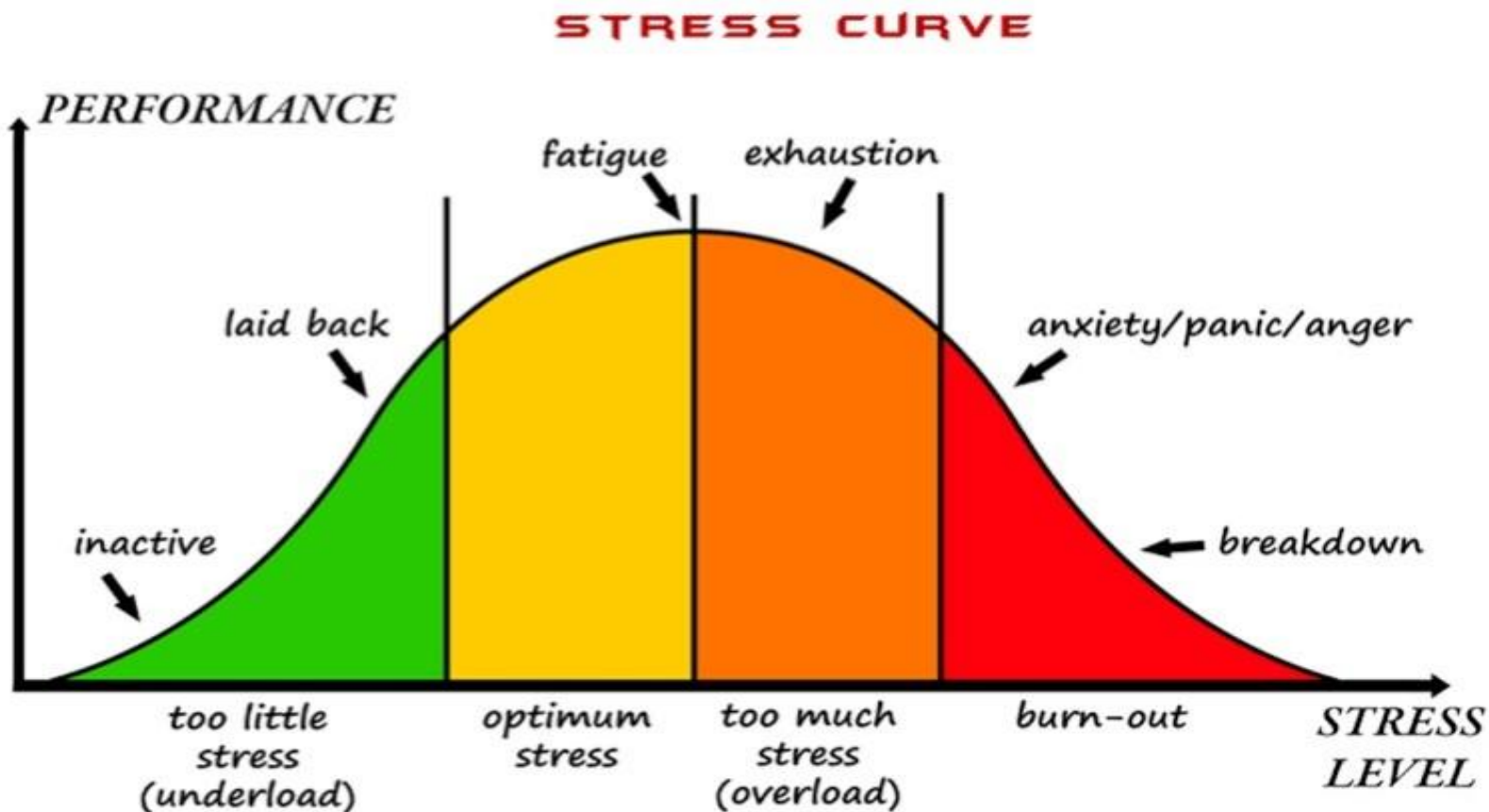
- **Stress =**

- *Stress can be defined as our mental, physical, emotional and behavioral reactions to any perceived demand or threat*

- **Mental strength =**

- *Ability to handle challenges, to manage thoughts, emotions, and actions under pressure the ability to regulate emotions, and persist toward goals*





**What challenges do you
face, as a masterstudent?**



Daily habits to strengthen the mind



Morning routine
(short, consistent)



Brief daily reflection
or journaling (5–10
min)



Regular physical
activity (20–45 min,
most days)



Sleep 7–9 hours



Limit impulsive
behaviors
(screen/time blocking)

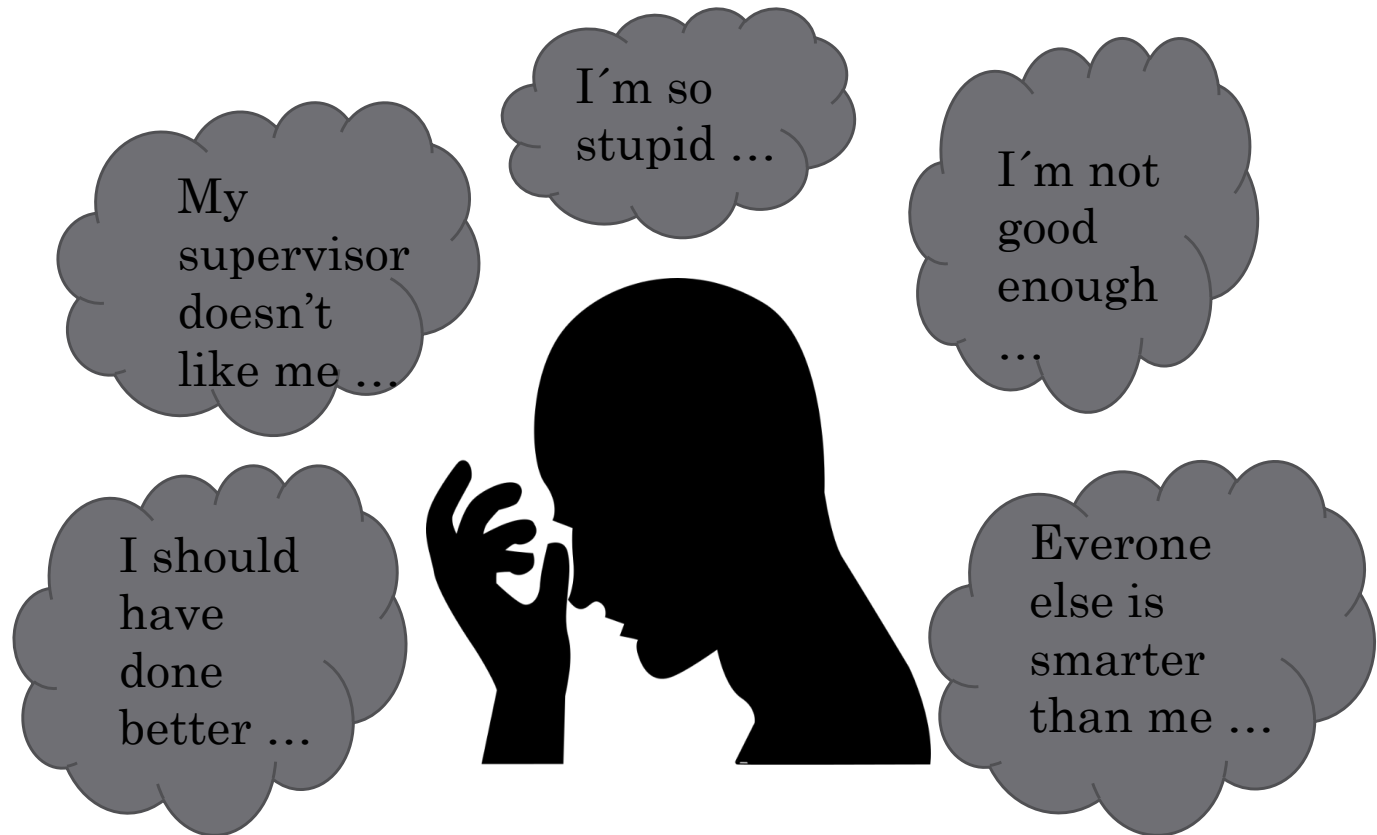
off the mark .com

by Mark Parisi



What is your best tip?

Negative thoughts ...



Stop negative thinking by questioning them:

- What's the evidence that the thought is true? That it's not true?
- What's the probability that what I'm scared of will actually happen?
- If the probability is low, what are some more likely outcomes?
- Is the thought helpful? How will worrying about it help me and how will it hurt me?
- What would I say to a friend who had this worry?

Cognitive skills

Reframe	Reframe negative thoughts
Separate	Separate controllable vs uncontrollable
Use	Use implementation intentions: “If X happens, I will Y”
Break	Break tasks into micro-steps to reduce overwhelm

Make a plan



Behavioral habits & exposure

- Build routines to reduce decision fatigue
- Use progressive exposure to discomfort (small, repeatable challenges)
- Habit hacks: 2-minute start rule; reduce friction for good habits

Social and meaning-based supports

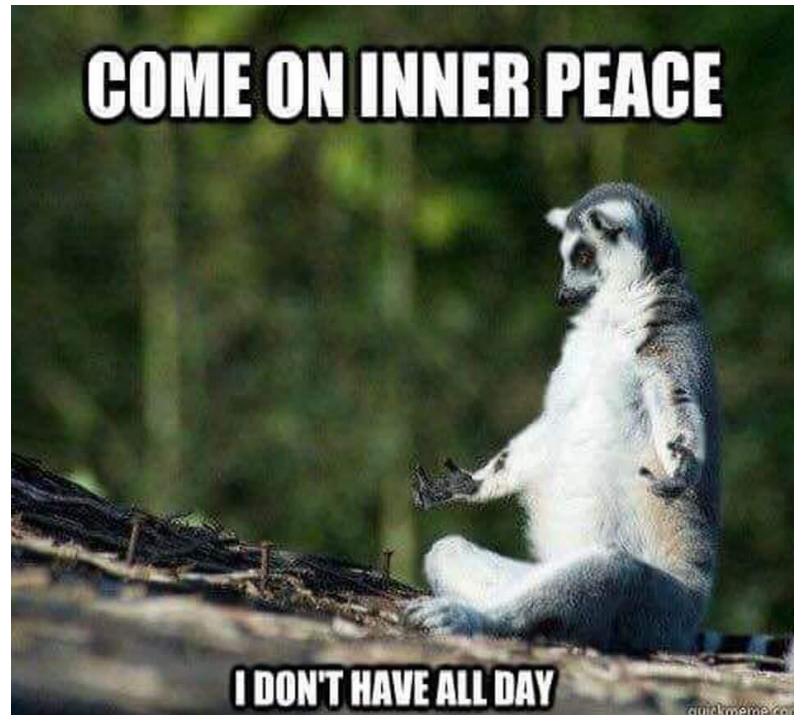
- Cultivate supportive relationships, talk to supportive people
- Seek mentors / accountability partners
- Connect tasks to larger values and purpose
- Practice giving, helping others strengthens resilience

Emotional regulation toolkit (for “in-the-moment” use)

- Pause-and-plan: 3 deep breaths + decide next step
- Label the emotion (“I’m angry/frustrated”)
- Ground: 5 things you see, 4 you can touch
- Mindfulness / focused breathing (2–10 min daily)
- Grounding techniques for intense moments

Deep breathing

- One of the easiest ways to relieve tension ...
- You can practice this technique almost anywhere, at any time ...



How to respond to setbacks

- Normalize setbacks — they are data, not identity
- Short post-mortem:
 - What happened? What helped? One small change next time ..
- Have a “restart” plan ready (no “all-or-nothing”)

Immediate action:

*Pick one habit to
start today!*

Summary & call to action

- Stress is normal; chronic stress is harmful
- Build mental strength by training body, mind, habits, and relationships
- Start small: pick 1 habit, schedule it, tell someone

Quick checklist:

- Sleep 7–9h | Move 20–30 min | 2–10 min reflection or mindfulness
- Daily pause: 3 deep breaths when stressed
- One weekly challenge (what/when?) | Accountability partner: name/contact
- Weekly reflection prompts:
 - What helped me this week?
 - What stressed me most?
 - One concrete step for next week

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Appendices: 40 ways to de – stress in less than 10 minutes

- 1) Listen to your favorite tunes
- 2) Head outside and get some fresh air
- 3) Stretch
- 4) Meditate
- 5) Read for pleasure
- 6) Walk or bike around the block
- 7) Count to 10
- 8) Journal
- 9) Dance
- 10) Write down 10 things you are grateful for
- 11) Watch candlelight
- 12) Tell some jokes
- 13) Doodle or draw
- 14) Call a friend
- 15) Chew a piece of gum
- 16) Focus and notice your present surroundings (grounding)
- 17) Disconnect from tech
- 18) Look at a happy photo
- 19) Squeeze a stress ball
- 20) Watch a funny YouTube video
- 21) Punch a pillow
- 22) Deep, slow breathing
- 23) Read an inspirational quote
- 24) Pet a dog or a cat
- 25) Practice yoga poses
- 26) Do 20 jumping jacks
- 27) Do something nice for someone
- 28) Sit in the sun
- 29) Watch the clouds
- 30) Pick some flowers
- 31) Give yourself a neck massage
- 32) Take a shower
- 33) Kick a soccer ball
- 34) Smile
- 35) Say "hallo" to a stranger
- 36) Practice breathing slowly
- 37) Wear your favorite perfume
- 38) Write a nice e-mail to a friend
- 39) Remember that stress is energy
- 40) Throw a paper airplane

How to make stress your friend?

Kelly McGonigal:

https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend?language=en