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## Turning Anxiety & Stress into Action Transcript

You'll receive a copy of the recording and a link to additional resources after the session. I'm Coach Adam Berardi, a Master Certified Professional Life Coach. Today, we'll cover how the nervous system is involved with stress and practice some stress management techniques.

I'm a certified LGBTQ+ and disability-owned business, with over 10 years of experience studying psychology and high performance, and a bachelor's degree in sociology. This topic is deeply personal for me. I used to suffer from severe anxiety, and by using the techniques we'll cover today, I've been able to manage my anxiety effectively.

### Statistics on Anxiety and Stress:

In the United States, 83% of workers report daily work-related stress, and 76% say this stress impacts their relationships. Anxiety is the number one mental health diagnosis in the U.S., affecting nearly 20% of adults.

### What is Stress?

If you feel comfortable, please share in the chat what stress means to you. Stress is the body's natural defense against danger, a response we developed in our early history when faced with life-and-death situations. Today, our brains can't distinguish between physical threats and modern-day stressors, like work or school. This activates a "fight-or-flight" response even when we're not in physical danger.

### Types of Stress:

- Acute Stress: Short-term and manageable, allowing the body to return to a calm state.
- Chronic Stress: Long-term and persistent, for example high-pressure jobs, toxic relationships, or chronic illnesses.

While short-term stress can increase alertness and energy, long-term stress can lead to serious health issues, like heart disease, high blood pressure, and anxiety.

#### Positive vs. Negative Stress:

Not all stress is bad. Positive stress, or eustress, motivates and energizes us. On the other hand, negative stress, or distress, can lead to exhaustion and reduced productivity.

#### Nervous System's Role in Stress:

- Sympathetic Nervous System: Activates the "fight-or-flight" response, increasing heart rate, blood pressure, and energy.
- Parasympathetic Nervous System: Activates "rest and digest," helping the body return to a calm state.

#### Emotional Duration:

How long do emotions last? Neuroscientist Dr. Jill Taylor found that the biochemical reaction for an emotion lasts only 90 seconds. Emotions extend when we ruminate on the event that triggered them.

#### Stress Management Techniques:

1. Body-Up Approaches: These start with the physical body and influence emotional and mental states, such as:

- Deep Breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Physical Exercise
- Yoga

#### Deep Breathing Exercise:

We'll practice box breathing, which activates the parasympathetic nervous system by signaling safety to the brain.

#### Grounding Exercise:

Focus on your surroundings to interrupt stress responses. The 5-4-3-2-1 exercise helps by focusing on the five senses: seeing five items, touching four surfaces, hearing three sounds, smelling two scents, and tasting something.

### Peripheral Vision Technique:

When stressed, tunnel vision can occur. By expanding our gaze to include our peripheral vision, we can signal safety to the body. Try holding your head still and looking to the right for 40 seconds, then to the left.

### Head-Down Approaches:

These focus on reasoning and thinking to address the root causes of stress and build emotional resilience:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Meditation
- Journaling
- Visualizations

### Reframing Situations:

Reframing changes your perspective on a situation. For example, turning anxiety into excitement can enhance performance, as the physical responses are similar.

### Reframing Example:

Imagine you're giving a presentation and feeling anxious. Start by identifying the source of stress, acknowledging your feelings, challenging negative thoughts, finding the silver lining, and creating a plan to manage the presentation.

### Word Association Exercise:

Certain words can trigger positive or negative feelings. Write down initial associations for words like "work" or "family." Reflect on how these words make you feel and, if needed, create a new association to shift perspective.

### Common Questions & Techniques

Q: Can these techniques help with chronic stress?

A: Yes. Techniques like deep breathing and grounding can reduce overall stress levels, while reframing can change perceptions of chronic stressors.

Q: How can I quickly activate the parasympathetic nervous system?

A: Using techniques like deep breathing, grounding, and naming the emotion you're feeling can quickly reduce stress. Changing your environment or taking a break can also be effective.

Q: How often should I practice these techniques?

A: Regular practice is key. Forming a habit with daily practice helps in stressful situations, allowing you to recall and use these techniques when needed.

For more resources, you'll receive a recording of this session, access to slides, and links to further information. Thank you for attending, and I hope these techniques help you turn anxiety and stress into actionable, positive outcomes.