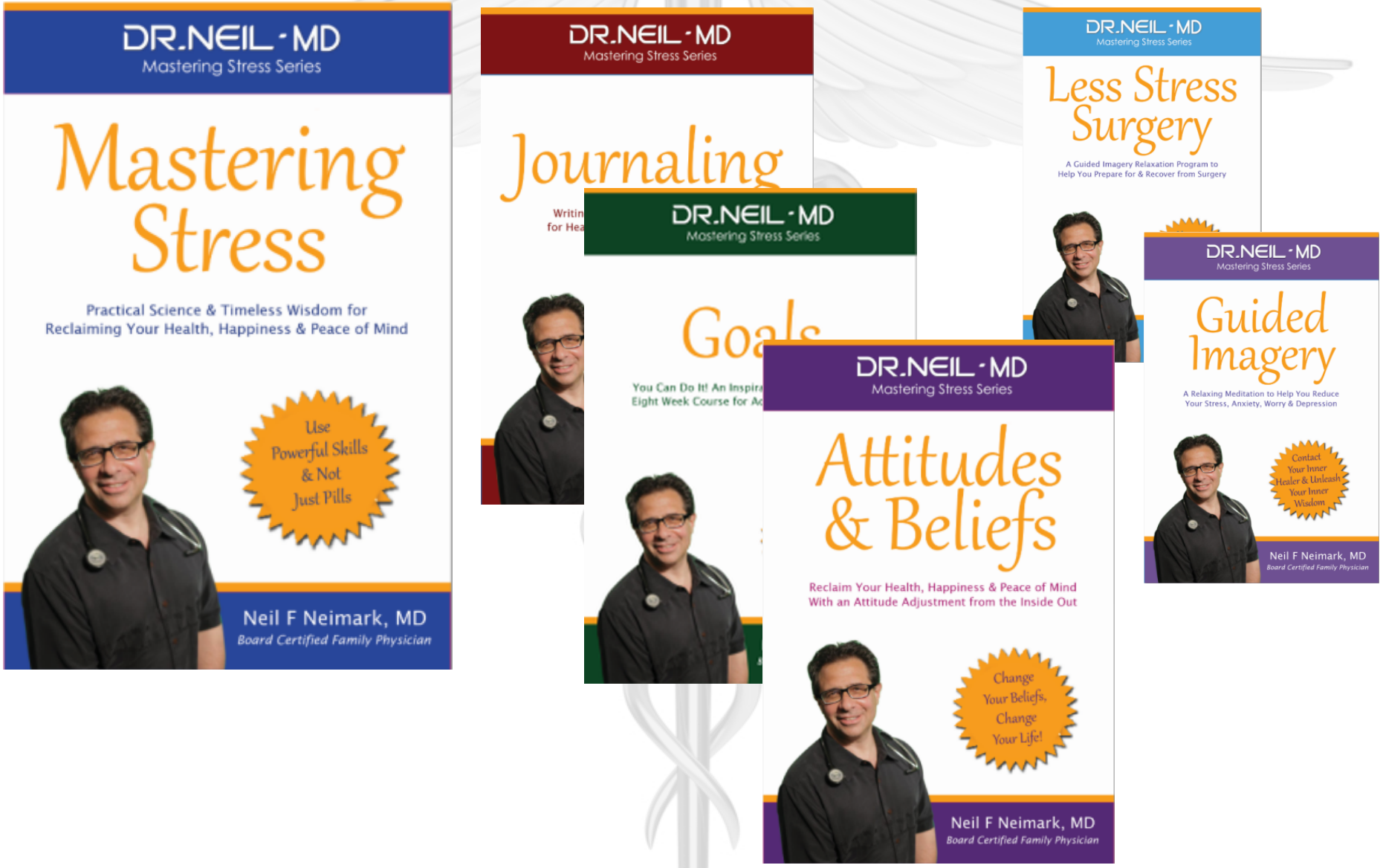
Media Kit

Mastering Stress Series



Stress Expert

Dr. Neil Neimark has devoted his entire medical career to deciphering the underlying causes and effects of stress on human health and happiness. His exploration and hands-on patient experience have resulted in the development of a series of articles, books, CD's and DVD's revealing how patients can use powerful skills and not just pills to reduce their stress, anxiety, worry and depression and reclaim their health, happiness and peace of mind.

Recognized for his personal warmth and approachable bedside manner, patients have dubbed him "Dr. Neil" but don't be fooled, he is a powerhouse of scientific knowledge and practical wisdom in the area of stress management. He is a Fellow of the American Institute of Stress, serves as an assistant clinical professor in the Department of Family Medicine, University of California, Irvine and serves on the Advisory Board for The Academy of Functional Medicine and Genomics. He has a private concierge practice in family medicine in Irvine, CA.

Dr. Neil is determined to prove that people can restore their physical health and emotional well-being with the proper leadership, support, and a clear blueprint for managing their stress. "There's no doubt about it—stress can break your spirit and destroy your health—however, with the right help and guidance, nearly everyone can learn from their stress rather than be destroyed by it."

We encourage you to join NeilMD.com and be updated on speaking engagements across the country.

Board Certified Family Physician

Dr. Neimark is a Board Certified Family Physician. He attended the Ohio State University College of Medicine where he graduated with honors in 1981 and was elected into the scholastic medical honor society, Alpha Omega Alpha.

While completing his internship, Dr. Neimark became disenchanted with traditional medicine's focus on treating the symptoms of disease, rather than searching for the underlying causes, lifestyle habits and emotional states of mind that lead to true health and healing. His desire to truly help people heal on a deeper level led Dr. Neimark on a mission to teach patients about the many mental, emotional and spiritual stressors that so often lead to poor health choices and unhappiness.

In 1984, he attended courses at the Mind/Body Clinic of New England Deaconess Hospital, Harvard Medical School, where he met Herbert Benson, MD and Joan Borysenko, PhD, pioneers in the field of mind/body health and psychoneuroimmunology. This event redirected his life. With this newfound focus, he finished his residency and went on to complete a fellowship in academic medicine, focusing on stress and the mind/body connection.

Dr. Neimark is in private practice in Irvine, where he successfully applies the principles of stress mastery and functional medicine to help his patients overcome illness and achieve greater physical and emotional well-being.

Dr. Neimark is married and lives with his wife, Marta, a published poet. They have three children, Chris, Jenny and Arianna and two wonderful dogs. He loves spending time with his family just laughing and "hanging out."

Interview with Dr. Neil

1. We've learned much about stress the last two decades—perhaps the most alarming is that it is a contributor to ill health—was this a turning point for you in your practice?

Yes it was. The turning point for me was much more than academic, it was very personal. Ironically during my internship training in family medicine when I was faced with hundred hour work weeks and the challenge of making new friends and integrating massive new amounts of information I became quite ill. I felt the stress on a very personal level and it ran me down and it wore me out physically and emotionally. It was a time in my life when I had left all my friends and family back in Ohio to move to Baltimore to start my internship and begin a new phase of my life and I must say I felt a bit isolated and alone and overwhelmed. In the process of negotiating all those mew demands and challenges, coupled with a lack of close friends and emotional support, I became emotionally depressed, which slowly lowered my immunity and three months into my training, I contracted a case of Infectious mononucleosis, complicated by an inflammatory hepatitis and anemia. I ultimately needed to be hospitalized. So in effect that single event really redirected my life in that I became acutely aware of how important and damaging stress can be In one's life. I ended up having to take six weeks off work in order to recuperate and during that time I really reevaluated what was most important to me, really thought through my priorities in life, and re-committed to developing strong friendships and More balance in my life so that I didn't become ill again. It was really a sort of spiritual reawakening in that I had to really define what was important to me and my purpose in life and why I was pursuing that. The truth is I almost left medicine because of that illness. I didn't want to be part of a profession that professed to help people find health and well-being in their lives but who's very training of it's own practitioners completely ignored the fundamental principles of living a healthy life. So yes it was a turning point in my life to realize on a personal level how damaging the effects of unremitting stress can be. Simultaneously it was a turning point to realize how healing and empowering a sense of purpose, commitment to what's important in life and good friends can be.

2. You are somewhat the contrarian inside western medicine and work with colleagues in psychology, nutrition, meditation, yoga, Acupuncture, chiropractic health—is this not a vulnerable place to be among colleagues?

Much less so today than what it was 30 years ago. There is at least - on a grassroots level - a deep understanding that the mind body and spirit are inseparable. To think that all the answers can come from a single paradigm of Western medical thought and reductive reasoning just doesn't work in a practical way. We need both reductive thinking and holistic thinking to really understand health and healing. For example reductive reasoning, by breaking things down into smaller and smaller parts, can eventually identify the individual nutrients that lead to good nutrition and good health, but reductive reasoning fails miserably in helping us to understand why people who know what a good diet is, fail to follow the principles of good nutrition. For that understanding, we have to enter into the realm of holistic thinking to determine the reasons why people make or refuse to make certain lifestyle changes that they know can help them. And that takes us into the area of psychology, where we can begin to explore the core wounds and character flaws that can affect us all on such a deep Level. We cannot understand why we make certain lifestyle choices until we understand the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions that underlie our core sense of who we are. And we cannot really understand who we are until we understand the spiritual elements that make up our lives, that is, our sense of purpose in life, what gives life meaning and our fundamental sense of belonging in the world. Whether we fundamentally feel that we belong or feel abandoned will have a dramatic effect on every aspect of our lives.

3. What is the one thing that concerns you the most regarding our stressful lives—are we passing it on from one generation to the next?

I think for me the most concerning aspect of our stressful lives today has to do with the lack of wisdom that seems to be an integral part of the fast pace technologically advanced world we're living in. Science and technology most certainly provide us the opportunity to live better, healthier and more efficient lives but unless we have the wisdom to understand what's important in life and what really matters most we will end up being very efficient at accomplishing absolutely nothing meaningful, and that can leave us feeling empty and hopeless. I offer you reality TV as the perfect example - fame and fortune due in large part to technological advancements for people who have absolutely nothing of value to contribute to life. Yes with today's advanced cars we can drive faster and in more comfort than ever, but where are we going to? Yes we can unlock the secrets of health and well-being, but what purpose are we living for? Without the answers to these fundamental spiritual questions all the science and technology in the world will not help us reduce our stress in a way that brings us the sense of fulfillment, happiness and meaning we're all looking for in life.

4. We're such a competitive world—business is seamless—women are trying to balance professions and motherhood—is it different for men and women when it comes to analyzing the causes of stress?

Unless you grew up on a different planet or bought into the crazy notion that men and women are essentially the same, we're all quite aware that there are dramatic differences between men and women in every aspect of life and being. We are complementary to one another but in no way the same. There are of course tremendous similarities in the brain and stress physiology but there are also dramatic differences as well. It's critical to understand that these differences are not in the realm of one is better or one is worse - it's just that what's important to men and what's important to women as well as certain methods of coping is dramatically different. Some of it is culturally based, some comes from hormonal differences, and some from genetic differences as well as functional differences in brain anatomy. There may also be a very spiritual component to what I'm talking about here - in that what is most important to men and women i.e. what gives meaning and purpose to our lives is very different. Men are driven by achievement and a sense of providing and protecting, whereas women are fundamentally driven by a need to connect, nurture and care for family and loved ones. Another fundamental difference tends to be in our reactions to stress. We all experience fight or flight whether we are male or female but in coping with that fight or flight response, men tend to follow an aggressive fighting approach (or fleeing approach) to protect what is most important to them, whereas women tend to move more towards an oxytocin type response - what has been called by researcher Shelley Taylor at UCLA, the "tend and befriend" response. So whereas men tend to individually and sometimes aggressively go after reducing their stress by attacking or fleeing from the source of it, women will tend to socialize and bond in an attempt to understand and manage their stress.

5. Your series, Mastering Stress—can you explain the title and are there ways to manage this global health threat?

Yes I think without a doubt there are very effective ways to manage stress in today's world. My goal with the mastering stress series has been to teach people how to use powerful skills instead of just pills to reduce their stress, anxiety, worry and depression. It takes a little longer to master the uncomfortablness of stress this way, but the sense of achievement and mastery that's attained by learning certain scientifically-based skills that can moderate the stress response is well worth the investment. After all, life – at times – is a relentless series of one stressful event after another and this understanding led me to develop what I call the “Stress Mastery Mission Statement” which says, "The ultimate purpose of all stress mastery is not to retreat from problems in life nor to make them magically disappear, but rather in the process of overcoming them, to grow in wisdom, character, contribution and goodness." It takes a certain amount of reframing to understand that stress is not our enemy, it is our teacher. If we apply this understanding, we can begin to see that all stress originates from some perception of threat - either to our physical body or psychological or spiritual well-being. With this insight, we can begin to understand the stress we feel in a completely different light. From this new viewing point, we can begin to see stress as a powerful teacher, who nudges and encourages us to learn and grow and become better and stronger. Stress - as a teacher - shines a light on the vulnerable places within us that need reassurance or the character flaws that need development or the deeper wounds that needs healed. When we truly learn from our stress, we engage in the powerful process of personal growth and development, in a way that allows us to achieve a sense of mastery in our ability to live a full and meaningful life - even in the midst of life's often extraordinary stresses.

6. You've taken a bold stand at the podium stating learn powerful skills and not just pills—is it possible to cross over leaving behind the millions of pills prescribed each year teaching a better way?

When I first came up with this idea that we need to teach people how to use powerful skills and not just pills I was careful to put in the words "just." There are, of course, times when the physiology or the biochemistry are twisted in such a way - either from genetics or environmental toxins or infectious diseases - that we need to use the very best of Western medical science in the form of medication or pills to help biochemically and electromagnetically alter these abnormalities through antidepressants and anti-anxiety agents. That is a perfectly reasonable and helpful approach in many difficult cases. The problem is, however, that we tend to turn to pills way too quickly. In most instances of stress, certain spiritual principles and psychological techniques are powerful stress reducers that work every bit as well as medications without the untoward side effects; such as the power of gratitude or appreciation or the power of helping someone in need or having a meaningful purpose in life. Science has clearly shown that these things can bring us a sense of fulfillment and contentment and happiness in life without having to turn the pills to just numb our pain. But, ironically, even in those cases where pills can help, what we have found is that although antidepressants and anti-anxiety agents do often relieve anxiety and depression, they don't make people happy. They just bring people back to neutral. And this is where the remarkable work of Martin Seligman and the positive psychology movement come into play. We need to tap into what is called our signature strengths, which I refer to as our God-given gifts. When we learn how to identify and utilize the gifts we have been given in life to help benefit ourselves and others in a meaningful way and help to make the world a better place by nurturing what's good and fighting what's bad, whether it's our own character flaws or some societal injustice, then we can begin the process of achieving true fulfillment and happiness in life. And this is the greatest form of stress mastery.

7. Technology makes everything now; news is presented often times, live, as it is happening---information is at the fingertips—is this adding to our stressful lives—are we unlearning the importance of rest?

No doubt about it the 24 hour cable news cycle has the potential to suck you in to a life filled with more stress, anxiety, worry and depression than ever before. But as with everything in life I believe it's a balance. It's my fundamental belief that we need to cultivate what I call effective R&R. But it's not what you think it is. Most people think of R&R as rest and relaxation, but in my philosophy of life R&R stands for rest and responsibility. We have a responsibility to know what's going on in the world and to step forth to fight the evil and the injustice and the abuses that we see. This is part of what gives life great meaning in terms of having a sense of purpose in life. But we need to balance that with the proper amount of rest and relaxation. And as we get really good and really skilled at mastering stress, we can find a place where we feel connected to a sense of calmness and clarity and purpose even in the midst of life's inevitable difficulties and struggles. That's not to say there's no value in taking a timeout. I certainly think there is. And one of my virtual mentors in life has been Dr. Andrew Weil who I remember years ago on a PBS special talking about the importance of periodically taking a fast from the news. I think there is great wisdom in that advice. But it’s one of my fundamental beliefs in life that God did not give us the inner strength and talents we have for us to retreat to some ashram and meditate all day, but rather to take the gifts we have been given, develop them and then to become partners with God in helping to create a better world.

8. Sleep deprivation is at an all time high—Americans are sleeping less—experts blame stressful lives—your take?

I like sleep, what can I say? From a physical health standpoint, I think it's important. And certainly if you're suffering from the ill effects of sleep apnea or sleep deprivation on a physical, mental or emotional level then you need to really pay attention to that. That being said I'm not a fanatic about sleep. I think there's way too much hype out there in terms of how critical sleep is and how damaging its effects can be. Yes, the studies are there the biochemical research but it's my belief that as in every other factor in health and life we need to find a balance. Personally some of the greatest growth I've ever achieved in my life has come at the expense of sleep. When I'm deeply involved in a project or in learning something new, for me sleep takes a back burner. Then yes, of course, these extended periods of lack of sleep need to be balanced with some extended periods of rest and rejuvenation in order to help make up some of that sleep deficit - but again, balance is the key. I personally love naps. I've taken them my whole life and the scientific research on napping is quite compelling. It regenerates our system almost as well as a full night's sleep in many ways. You know I recently started this great core training program by a guy on late night TV infomercials called Shaun T. He has a powerful fitness program called "Focus T-25." One of his bylines in that advertisement, which really made me laugh, is where he says "just give me 25 minutes every day and I'll get you in shape. That's all it takes, 25 minutes!" Then he slyly says this little gem "You can rest when you go to bed!" I feel the same way about life. Let's make the most of it; let's focus on the workout by finding a sense of purpose and meaning in life that helps us to do good in the world and fight what's bad. We've only got a short time here on this journey and my belief is like Shaun T, "you can rest when you go to heaven." Again, remember to add wisdom and balance to that notion. My idea is this: make the most out of life, learn and grow and develop your character and your signature strengths and your abilities to do good in the world and that is the best stress reducer there is. Then you will rest completely from the satisfaction of knowing that you really made a difference with the precious life you've been given.

9. Your series, Mastering Stress, seems determined to make its mark so that people CAN change their lives—is this your goal?

Yes. It's always been my belief that we are given this precious life to do something important with. Yes there are stresses in life and there are challenges and there are difficulties and no question about it life is painful and difficult at times. There's so much that we don't understand but my fundamental religious upbringing in Judaism taught me a very important concept called "tikkun olam," which means “repair the world." And that directive from God to us is that it is our responsibility to help repair what we find is broken in the world. If you see something that needs fixed, then it's my belief that God put that in your path so that you could do something about it. And when you have purpose you have peace and you have inner strength and that’s what really helps dissolve away most of the ordinary stresses that we feel in life. So yes, it is my goal to empower patients and people to achieve a level of health and emotional, mental and spiritual well-being that allows them to really make a difference in their lives by helping to make this world a more loving, just, beautiful and good world in which to live.

Lecture Series

Speeches are crafted for each audience and their specific theme.

Running time is approximately 30-40 minutes with time allotted for questions if appropriate.

- ✓ Recognizing When Stress is Serious
- ✓ The Art of Mastering Stress
- ✓ Power Skills Over Just Pills
- ✓ C-Suite Stress: Hidden Killer
- ✓ Female Professional-Wife-Mother: Balancing it All
- ✓ Out of Control vs. Out of Your Control

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