

## BOOK REVIEW

# Book review: *How to Deal with Stress*

Siobhain O’Riordan<sup>1</sup>

**Title:** How to Deal with Stress (3rd edition)

**Authors:** Stephen Palmer and Cary Cooper

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This practical book takes a self-coaching approach and provides an accessible guide on how to deal with stress. Early on in the text, the authors explain that the book ‘... gives an in-depth insight into the causes of stress and how to successfully deal with them?’ (p.2). These important objectives are paid attention to within each chapter and form part of the ongoing conversation with the reader.

The authors are both established international experts in the fields of psychology and stress management, having already contributed widely to the coaching, counselling and stress literature. Subsequently, the book draws on this considerable experience and knowledge. Indeed, a stand out feature is that chapters are generously packed with information, resources, activities, observations and strategies that the interested reader can put into action straight away to help themselves and/or use as a toolkit when

working with others as a stress management professional.

The book is divided into 10 chapters, beginning with an exploration of the definition of stress and the significance of concepts such as financial costs, control and the biology of stress. Moving on, we are then offered a working model of stress, coping and resilience and important insights into the role of emotions are shared.

Alongside this the authors point out that that “How a person responds to stress is possibly the key to help him or her tackle stress” (p.40), which sets the scene for the subsequent book structure and topics covered.

For example, Chapter 3 outlines stress reduction strategies to help us examine and change our thinking, reminding the reader “... that your perceptions about events, or thinking style and attitudes, can also contribute to your levels of stress” (p43). Chapter 4 sets out a range of stress management step-by-step

activities to help us change our imagery, including coping, time-projection and relaxation techniques. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss ways to change behaviour and improve physical health to help manage stress. Next, Chapter 7 introduces the solution-focused approach and the seven step PRACTICE Model as a framework to help facilitate us (or when working with others) to move beyond stress related problems toward a more solution orientated approach. Chapter 8 looks at work-related stress and summarises the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recommendations around organisational stress management and tackling the sources of stress at work. The closing chapters (9 and 10), provide an opportunity to complete a Stress Self-Audit and readers are encouraged to develop an Action Plan, based on their responses from activities and questionnaires presented during the course of the book.

In summary, this book would appeal to a broad target audience and the authors have done well to express their ideas clearly using straightforward and user-friendly language. However, in light of this, if you are seeking out an academic text and what to spend time exploring the underpinning theories and research in more detail then this is probably beyond the intended scope of this practical guide. Having said that, as a pracademic, I find that this book is a key resource in my library, which I draw upon within my stress and resilience coaching practice, academic, training and supervision work. So, if you are interested in learning more about stress management and ways to build upon your knowledge and toolkit in this important area, this is definitely a key resource to add to your bookshelf. ■

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### Biography

**Dr Siobhain O’Riordan PhD** is a chartered psychologist and chartered scientist. She is a Fellow of the International Society for Coaching Psychology and member and Trustee of The International Stress Management Association (UK). Siobhain is also a trainer and course co-director on the stress management and coaching programmes at the Centre for Stress Management.

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