*Stress Management Training S1.d*

*Session One*

***Understanding Stress***

Stress is a normal part of life. If we are in a threatening situation, we respond with the Fight or Flight Syndrome, which is an instinctual reaction to danger. All animals respond automatically when they feel under threat.

However, sometimes this response is triggered by a situation that is stressful, but not life-threatening. It can be set off by feelings, ideas, memories and expectations, and for many people stress can become a normal reaction to many life situations.

 Fight or Flight

* The heartbeat increases to pump blood with greater speed,

 carrying oxygen and nutrients to cells and clearing away waste products.

* As the heartbeat increases the blood pressure rises.
* Adrenaline and other hormones are released into the blood.
* The liver releases stored sugar for more energy.
* The pupils dilate to let in more light.
* All the senses work more efficiently.
* Muscles tense for movement.
* Blood flow is constricted to the hands and feet and they

 become cold.

* The body sweats to cool itself.

In a situation which is not life-threatening, these physical changes may be experienced as extremely unpleasant, causing palpitations, pain in the muscles resulting from excessive tension, insomnia, breathlessness, numbness, tingling, dizziness, sickness, fainting, headaches, indigestion, diarrhoea, fatigue, chest pains, blurred vision, nausea and shaking, to name but a few possible symptoms.

It is possible to change our response to many everyday events from Fight or Flight to Relaxation, which is the physical opposite to the Fight or Flight syndrome. Practise your first Stress Management Relaxation Exercise, and see how much better you feel.