**Tools for Managing Stress**

*In order of effectiveness*

1. **Suppression (not effective)**

Although tempting, suppressing emotions is not an effective strategy. It has been linked to depression, and most experts agree that suppressed emotions find ways to “leak out” when not acknowledged and addressed in some way. We also tend to think that we can hide out emotions from others, but research shows that sitting next to someone who is upset and suppressing will raise your blood pressure (and the suppressor’s as well).

1. **Naming the emotion**

Research shows that simply naming an emotion reduces amygdala activity. This is certainly the simplest and easiest tool in the coach’s toolkit for helping a client manage stress, although some clients may need to build this muscle—the coach can help them expand their emotional vocabulary and practice this skill.

1. **Controlling the Environment**

This is probably the most effective strategy – nothing is better than actually removing the source of stress – however, it ranks low on the list because it is only effective in those cases where it is possible to do so. We can’t control everyone and everything in our lives, and attempting to will only create a net increase in stress. Still, where possible, this is a great strategy.

1. **Values and Life Purpose**

Research shows that reflecting on meaningful values and life purpose serves as a buffer to stress. This strategy engages the pre-frontal cortex and gives clients a broader context for their lives, a container for decision-making and a map for future direction.

1. **Reframing**

The act of reframing (also known as taking a new perspective or reappraisal) also activates the pre-frontal cortex, calming down our stress responses. Reappraisal has been touted by some neuroscientists as one of the most important skills a human being can develop for their mental health and life success.

1. **Mindfulness**

Mindfulness seems to be the most effective solution to any neuroscience challenge, from stress, to creativity, to improving memory, and even being more emotionally intelligent. As coaches, much of what we do helps our clients become more “mindful.” Even just a good coaching conversation brings people present into the moment and makes them pay attention to what is going on, rather than putting their attention on regrets from the past or worries about the future. Additionally, we can encourage clients to meditate, and use guided meditation and other focusing tools within the coaching session.