

Mental Health  
Awareness Week  
21-27 September

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**#MHAWNZ**

## **Stress less: Proven methods to reduce stress, manage anxiety and lift your mood**

**Johnstone, M., &, Player, M. (2019). Pan Macmillan Australia.**

Wow what a read!

This book is beautifully illustrated and holds valuable techniques to help with stress and anxiety. It is not a book you can read in one sitting. It can be overwhelming to try to absorb everything on offer. You need to look at each chapter as an individual session. This is a book I would recommend having on your shelf so you can refer to it often. Those in the corporate world, universities and helping fields would find it a valuable tool for their clients, their students and themselves. An enjoyable but intense read.

**Reviewed by Karen Bernhardt**

I am a great fan of Matthew Johnstone's visual work. He is very talented at portraying emotions and humour through his illustrations. His earlier works *I had a black dog: His name was depression*, *Living with a black dog* and *The little book of resilience*, were all charming, insightful and powerful. Johnstone brings not only his talent as an illustrator to his books, but also his personal experience of mental illness.

His new title *Stress Less* is a collaboration with clinical psychologist and researcher Dr Michael Player. This brings a second lens of best practice and proven clinician techniques to the book's content. Their main aim is to help readers to recognize thinking patterns and behaviours that lead to stress, and to provide a range of techniques and approaches to problem solve, manage stress and aid relaxation.

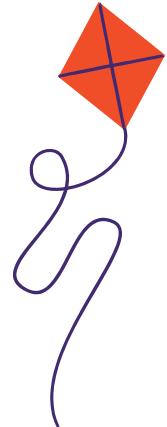
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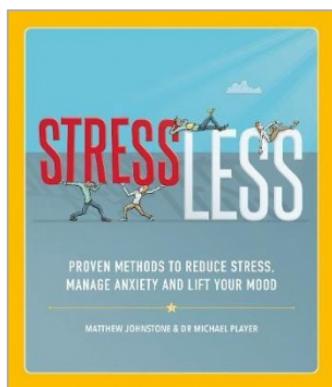
There is no one quick fix presented within the book: they encourage you to try out and adapt the concepts and insights based on your own personal experiences. They suggest you have a dedicated notebook handy whilst reading the book to jot down ideas that inspire or ring true to you – the act of note-taking may also increase your chances of putting a technique into practice.

Compared to Johnstone's first titles, this book is bigger, and jam packed with written information about mindfulness, kindness, self-compassion, gratitude, cognitive behavioural therapy, exercise, and nutrition. I suggest you just dip into a section at a time, as while there are many valuable learnings, you may need to pace yourself! Another approach for those fond of Johnstone's visual work could be to flick solely through the illustrations (I admit this was my first tactic), as these themselves provide many opportunities to pause, relate and have the occasion chuckle, which can sometimes result in a healing moment in itself.

This is the type of book you want to own, it will be well worn and referred back to often.



**Reviewed by Kim Higginson, Information Management Specialist, MHF**



The Mental Health Foundation's Information Service brings you reviews as part of the Good Reads feature for Mental Health Awareness Week. To view more go to <https://mhaw.nz/>