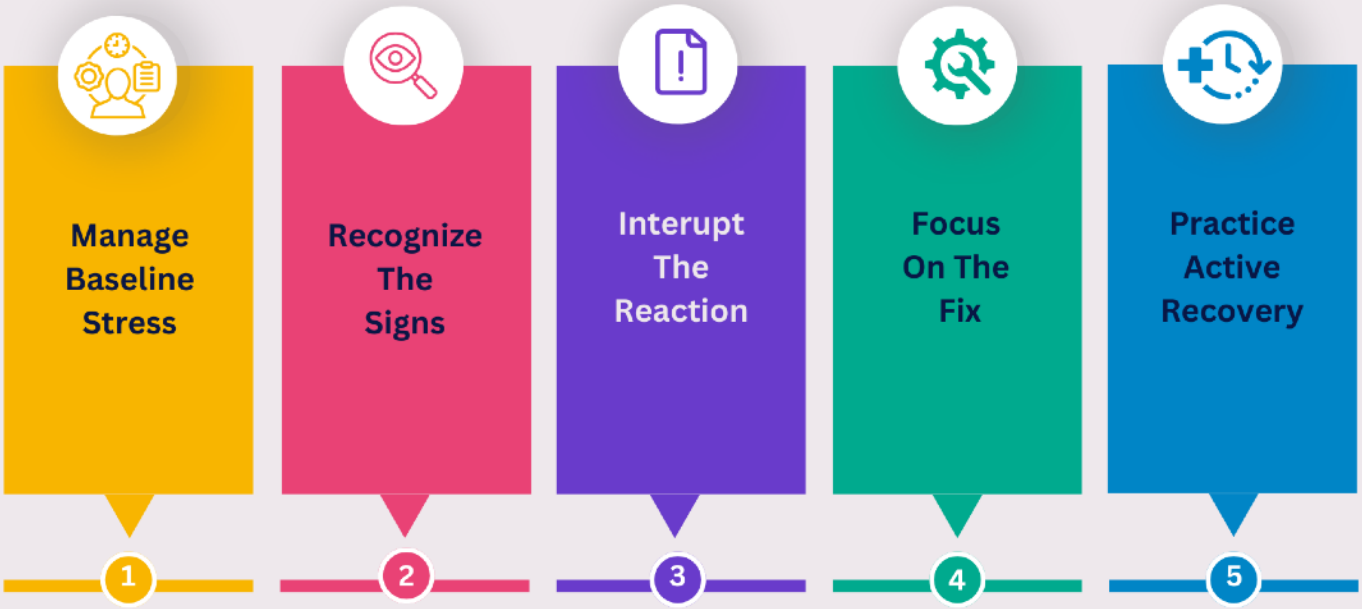
# The Stress-Proof Event Professional:

5 Steps for Low Stress and Great Success in High-Pressure Moments.



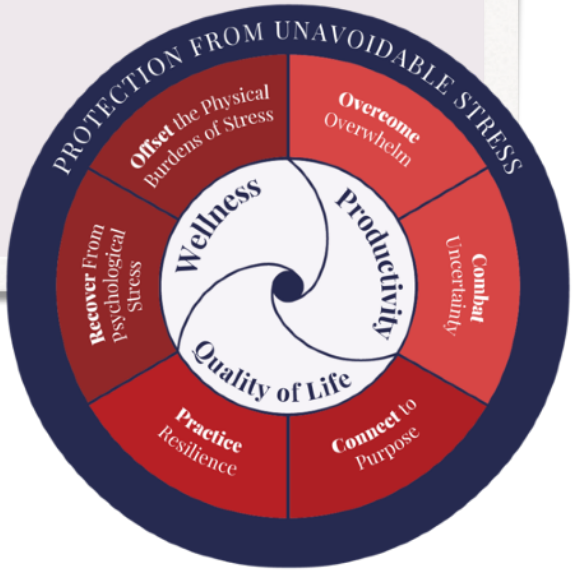

by

ElizGreene
Low Stress & Great Success

# Stress-Proof Event Professional (n.):

- An individual skilled in the art and science of event planning, characterized by an exceptional ability to navigate the industry's high-pressure demands with grace, efficiency, and a proactive approach to stress management. This professional employs strategic methods to identify and mitigate potential stressors, ensuring optimal physical health, emotional well-being, and project success. Recognizing that stress is influenced by both external situations and internal responses, they maintain equilibrium and focus, transforming challenges into opportunities for creative problem-solving.

- A practitioner who prioritizes self-care, understands the significance of healthy boundaries, and actively cultivates a supportive professional network. Through practices that enhance personal resilience, the stress-proof event professional approaches each task with confidence and a clear mindset. Their adaptability and forward-thinking attitude not only facilitate career excellence but also contribute positively to the work environment, embodying the principle of thriving in the face of the event planning industry's inherent stresses.

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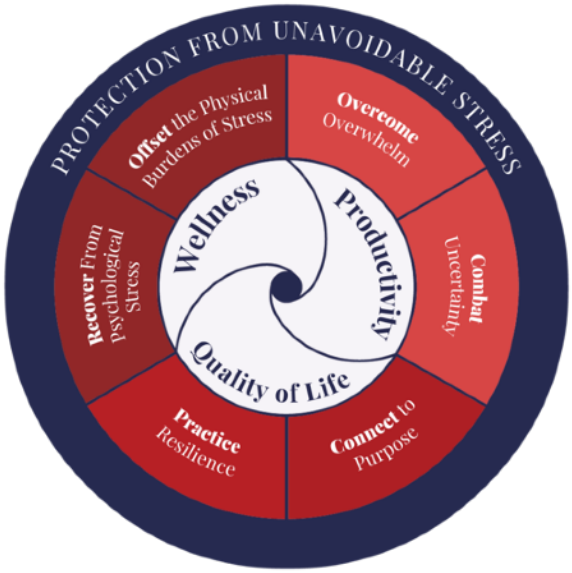

# The Problem

In the fast-paced world of event planning, professionals often find themselves in the eye of the storm, navigating through high expectations, stringent deadlines, and unforeseen challenges. Recognized among the top three most stressful occupations, alongside first responders and airline pilots, event professionals grapple with a constant high baseline of stress. This relentless pressure, combined with stress triggers such as demanding clients, picky attendees, and logistical nightmares, can precipitate a stress reaction crisis, leaving even the most seasoned professionals feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, and frazzled.

Even with a low baseline stress level, a "stress dumping" experience can cause a dangerous spike in the stress chemical cortisol. Here is an example of what happens:

- A former President of the association hosting the event storms up to the registration desk during the opening keynote, yells about how the event app isn't working, and demands it be fixed immediately.
- The president is visibly upset.
- The president's neurons start talking to your neurons, and your neurons begin to mirror them.
- You begin to have a stress reaction, and cortisol floods your system.
- Your heart beats faster; you might start feeling cold and hyper-focused on the problem.
- Unfortunately, that stress response also clouds your critical and creative thinking and hyper-powers your emotional reaction—none of which help solve the problem.
- Even when the problem is eventually solved, this type of stress tends to hang around, replaying in our heads and adding to our baseline stress.

All of that is a natural reaction to your environment, but stress doesn't have to rule the day.

There is a solution.

# The Solution

**Stress-Proof: A non-nonsense approach to stress management**

Eliz Greene, the creator of the Stress-Proof System, offers a lifeline to those battling the tumultuous seas of event management. From her extensive research and experience with high-pressure public-facing roles, Eliz provides a five-step recovery guide designed to manage in-the-moment stress spikes during events and recover from those moments so they don't linger and add to your baseline stress. This ebook is a guide to becoming Stress-Proof for Event Professionals.

## What does it mean to be Stress-Proof?

Stress-Proof people possess the resilience and skills necessary to navigate life's inevitable stressors with grace and effectiveness. It involves adopting a proactive mindset that treats stress management as a hard skill, rather than relying on fleeting remedies or avoidance tactics. Stress-Proof individuals are adept at recognizing the sources of stress in their environment and have developed practical strategies to mitigate its impact on their physical health, emotional well-being, and overall quality of life. They understand that stress is not solely a result of external circumstances but is also influenced by their internal responses and coping mechanisms.

Moreover, being Stress-Proof means cultivating a mindset of adaptability and resilience in the face of adversity. Stress-Proof individuals are not immune to challenges or setbacks, but they possess the tools and mindset to bounce back stronger from difficult situations. They prioritize self-care, maintain healthy boundaries, and cultivate strong support networks to bolster their resilience in times of stress. Ultimately, being stress-proof is about empowering oneself to thrive in the face of life's uncertainties, embracing challenges as opportunities for growth, and maintaining a sense of balance and well-being amidst life's ups and downs.

Here's how you can use the Stress-Proof skills from Eliz's Book ***Stress-Proof Your Life*** to navigate through and recover from the inevitable stress of event management:

# The 5-Step Recovery Guide:

1. Manage Baseline Stress
2. Recognize the Signs
3. Interrupt the Reaction
4. Focus on the Fix
5. Practice Active Recovery

# Step #1: Manage Baseline Stress:

## Know Before You Go

Event professionals rarely enter a meeting with a zero baseline of stress. This event is likely one of many you are planning this year, and juggling multiple timelines, requirements, and other work and life obligations creates a consistently high stress level. If that level is too high, your body and brain don't work as well as they should. Before heading off to the next event or any day you know stress is going to be higher, take time to lower your baseline stress level to withstand the additional pressure.

- **Understanding Baseline Stress:** The discomfort you feel might not stem from a single event but from the stress that has piled up over time. This under-the-radar stress subtly undermines your mental clarity and creativity, making recognizing and addressing it crucial before it becomes overwhelming.

- **Assessment and Awareness:** The Baseline Stress Level Quiz is a starting point for understanding your current stress levels. It provides insights into how accumulated stress affects your well-being and helps you recognize stressors you may not have been aware of.

- **Mitigation Strategies:** To mitigate baseline stress, integrate ways to lower your cortisol levels and return them to normal in your daily routine. Regular physical activity, singing, and hobbies or activities that you find enjoyable and relaxing are effective. Activities like reading, gardening, crafting, or even listening to music can be effective stress reducers. These strategies help divert your mind from stressors, offering a mental break and improving overall well-being. Engaging in activities that you love enhances your mood, boosts your resilience to stress, and keeps your mind engaged in a positive, fulfilling way.

**Click here to take the Baseline Stress Level Quiz**

# Step #2: Recognize The Signs:

## Heading Off Danger

As your body reacts to stress triggers in your environment, the increased cortisol causes signals. Noticing those signals and the signals you receive from others allows you to recognize the "stress-dumping" situation or your reaction to the crisis, take steps to limit the impairment of your critical and creative thought, and choose your emotional response.

- **Your Emotional and Physical Cues:**
  Recognizing signs such as a racing heart, chills, excessive sweating, trembling hands, or overwhelming feelings of anxiety is crucial. These are your body's alarm signals indicating a stress response. For instance, your breathing might become shallow and rapid during stressful meetings, or your muscles tense up when facing tight deadlines. These physical manifestations are often accompanied by emotional signs, such as feeling irritable, overwhelmed, or unable to focus. Acknowledging these symptoms early allows you to take timely action, like engaging in activities that help soothe your body and mind, preventing stress from escalating.

- **Cues from Others:**
  Identifying stress in others is crucial and can be discerned through their verbal and non-verbal cues. Non-verbal signs include aggressive or exaggerated gestures, a restless demeanor, or pacing back and forth, which all signal a high-stress level they are trying to offload. Observing these behaviors allows you to recognize when someone is not just sharing but dumping their stress onto

you, enabling you to prepare a supportive but boundary-respecting response. Understanding and identifying stress-dumping behaviors are essential for maintaining a positive and productive work atmosphere, ensuring that stress is managed constructively rather than spread within the team. You might hear a colleague frequently complaining or venting about their workload, deadlines, or personal issues with a tone of frustration or desperation. They may also interrupt conversations to share their stressors, often overshadowing other topics.

- **Early Intervention:**
  Identifying signs of stress early provides a critical window for intervention, preventing the escalation of more severe anxiety or stress-related issues. This proactive approach to managing stress ensures that you maintain control over your reactions and decisions rather than being controlled by stress. Cultivating a habit of early intervention can transform how you handle stress, making you more resilient and adaptable in high-pressure environments.

# Step #3: Interrupt the Reaction:

## Stop the Flow of Cortisol

Accepting your reaction as a natural response, using physical techniques, and reframing interrupt the cortisol release and allow your brain and body to function better so you can respond effectively.

- **Mental Shift:** Validating your own feelings as a natural reaction in stressful situations is crucial. Acknowledging your emotions without allowing them to take over enables you to approach the problem with a clearer mind. This mental shift towards understanding your feelings and the other party's emotions does not mean disregarding your feelings but balancing them with considering the other person's viewpoint. It encourages a more empathetic and solution-focused response, which can de-escalate potentially stressful interactions. Adopting this approach ensures that stress does not dictate your actions, allowing for more productive and positive outcomes.

- **Physical Techniques:** Your brain works better without a large cortisol load and you can tell your body it is time to release cortisol with one of the following signals:
  - **Lengthen your breath.** Taking 5 to 10 longer, deeper breaths can do the trick.
  - **Move your body.** Stand up, shift side to side on your feet, pace, shake your hands, swivel, or scoot back and forth in your chair.
  - **Change your focus.** Move your eyes to another place - bonus points if this place is a window, a photo of nature, or getting outside.
  - **Drink something hot or cold.**

These techniques are practical tools in your stress management toolkit, offering immediate relief and helping to reset your focus.

- **Reframe Your Perspective:** When encountering stress caused by other people, taking a moment to reframe your perspective can significantly impact how you respond. This involves asking specific questions to broaden your understanding and reduce immediate stress responses. These questions facilitate a deeper insight into the situation, encouraging a shift from a reactive to a more thoughtful stance.

    - **What if this is the best they can do?**
      Considering this question helps you cultivate patience and empathy towards others' actions or responses. It challenges you to acknowledge the complexities and limitations others might be facing, fostering a more compassionate view that can ease your stress.

    - **What if there is something I don't understand?**
      This question prompts you to consider the possibility of unknown factors affecting the situation. Acknowledging that you might not have all the information can lead to more straightforward communication, reduce misunderstandings, and lower stress levels.

    - **What if it isn't about me?**
      Reflecting on this question allows you to distance yourself emotionally from the situation, helping you realize that others' stress or reactions may not be a direct response to your actions. This detachment can be liberating, reducing the personal strain and making it easier to approach the situation with a level head.

# Step #4: Focus on the Fix:

## Lean Away From Emotion

It is tempting to lean into emotions and crisis, but ultimately, it is unproductive. Turning your attention to resolving the problem or simply navigating the situation calmly and effectively is more productive, less stressful, and produces better results.

- **Start with Validation:** Reacting to someone's upset by first recognizing and validating the other person's feelings is a powerful way to alleviate tension immediately. A simple acknowledgment like, "I understand why this situation is so frustrating for you," goes a long way in showing empathy. This initial validation step serves as a bridge, connecting your intent to assist with their need to be heard and understood. It creates a foundation of trust, indicating that you are not dismissing their concerns but rather acknowledging the weight of their experience. By validating their feelings, you clarify that their emotions are legitimate, paving the way for a more open and constructive conversation.

- **Exude Calm Neurons:** It's important to remember that our brains are just as capable of mirroring calm neurons as stressed ones, meaning your tranquility can be infectious, encouraging a similar response in the person you're engaging with. For example, deliberately slowing down your speech pace and intentionally moderating your voice's volume and tone can be a powerful tool to diffuse tension. By embodying calmness, especially in potentially volatile scenarios, you facilitate more constructive dialogue and lay the groundwork for practical problem-solving, showcasing that challenges can be approached with patience and professionalism.

- **Orient to a Solution:** Guiding the conversation toward finding solutions rather than dwelling on the problem encourages a constructive dialogue. For instance, after listening and validating the person's concerns, you might ask, "What steps can we take together to address this issue?" This shifts the focus to resolution and involves the other party in problem-solving, making them feel heard and part of the solution. Creating this safe space for open dialogue fosters cooperation and minimizes defensiveness. Maintaining a solution-oriented mindset helps steer the interaction away from conflict and towards actionable outcomes.

- **Communicate with Strength:** Communicating effectively is critical to managing and resolving stressful situations. Employing calm tones, speaking slowly and clearly, and choosing your words carefully can help prevent misunderstandings and keep the conversation focused. For example, a concise statement like, "Let's see how we can fix this," can be more effective than a lengthy explanation. Providing a clear, simple roadmap for addressing the issue at hand reassures the other person that there is a path forward. These communication techniques not only aid in resolving the immediate problem but also build trust and credibility for future interactions.

# Step #5: Practice Active Recovery:

## Tailor Your Approach to Stress Relief

Eliz created a program specifically for high-performance teams in high-pressure occupations as part of her work with NASA, encouraging active stress recovery similar to active physical recovery used by high-performance athletes. Effective stress management requires a personalized approach, recognizing that each individual has unique needs for disconnecting from stressors and decompressing. The key is identifying activities and environments that reduce stress and resonate with your personal stress recovery personality.

- **Discover How to Disconnect:** Stress often does not stop once the problem has been solved. Our bodies hold on to cortisol, and our brains replay interactions. Actively seeking ways to disrupt the brain's occupation with stress and recover is essential.

    - **Identifying Personal Escapes:** It's essential to find activities or environments that allow you to step away from the sources of your stress. This could mean immersing yourself in a hobby that captures your full attention, spending time in nature, or simply being in the company of those who uplift you. Disconnecting halts the relentless cycle of cortisol production, providing your mind and body with the necessary respite to recover.

    - **Understanding Your Stress Recovery Personality:** Are you an iguana, finding solace in stillness and quiet? Or are you a border collie, requiring movement and engagement to unwind? Recognizing whether you need calm and restorative activities or physical and mental engagement is crucial in effectively managing your stress. This understanding allows you to tailor your recovery activities to fit your personal needs, enhancing their effectiveness.

**Click here to take the Stress Recovery Personality Quiz**

- **Prioritize Decompression:** Too often, we prioritize getting things done over supporting our ability to do them well. Give yourself permission to ease the pressure.

    - **Customizing Your Decompression Methods:** Active recovery isn't just about physical activities; it's about choosing practices that align with your individual stress recovery needs. For some, this might mean engaging in physical exercises like yoga or running; for others, it could involve creative outlets such as painting or writing. The goal is to engage in activities that provide a genuine sense of relief and joy, aiding in the emotional decompression process.

    - **Balancing Physical and Emotional Recovery:** Incorporating physical activities and emotional decompression techniques into your routine is vital for a holistic recovery process. Physical activities like walking or cycling help lower cortisol levels and improve physical health. In contrast, emotional decompression activities cater to your mental well-being, whether that's through laughter, social interactions, or moments of solitude.

Adopting a personalized approach to stress recovery empowers you to manage stress effectively. Whether you need an iguana's quiet contemplation or a border collie's dynamic engagement, understanding and embracing your unique recovery needs is vital to fostering resilience and promoting overall well-being.

# Bonus Step For Bosses:

## Tips for Your Team (and you too)

Event professionals who oversee teams and the industry's unique challenges require individual resilience and a cohesive and supportive team environment. Here are some tailored tips to help you lead your team effectively through the high-pressure moments inherent in event planning and management:

- **Value and Recognition:**
  One leadership insight from Eliz's books is that high performers need to feel valued and seen in order to perform well and stay committed to the team. Think of your team as plants. Regularly shower them with appreciation and watch them flourish. This praise and recognition is critical during and immediately after high-stress events and interactions.

- **Equip with Training:**
  Provide resources and opportunities to learn skills to manage stress. Share this e-book with them to start!

- **Have Proactive Conversations:**
  Check in with your team, especially during events, and encourage them to check in with each other. Have open communication about the expectations of stressful interactions and what they are and are not allowed to do to recover from interactions.
  - **Yes,** tell a coworker you are going up to your room for 15 minutes.
  - **No,** you may not take a shot of whiskey during work hours. (A little humor never hurts either).

- **Celebrate Together:**
  High-fives and smiles are great when things are going well, and they work when the going is tough, too. Make it a point to celebrate team successes, no matter how small, and learn from challenges without placing blame. Acknowledging hard work and resilience fosters positive team morale and motivates everyone to strive for excellence.

- **Foster Space for Transition:**
  Allow your team to discuss and decompress at the end of the event (or at the end of each day or interaction). Getting cortisol levels down on-site is much better than packing the stress and taking it home as a souvenir.

- **Encourage Taking Breaks:**
  Avoid burnout by utilizing vacation time, stepping away during work time, and disconnecting from work outside of office hours. A well-rested team is more creative, energetic, and effective.

- **Lead by Example:**
  Demonstrate effective stress management and resilience in your actions. When leaders handle stress positively and maintain a calm demeanor, they set a powerful example for the team. Your behavior can inspire your team to adopt similar strategies and attitudes. Oh, and take your breaks and vacation too!

By implementing these tips, you can create a supportive, resilient, and high-performing team capable of quickly navigating the complexities and pressures of event planning. Remember, a team that feels supported and valued will likely exceed expectations and deliver outstanding events.

# Becoming Stress-Proof

## Finding Your Path to Low Stress and Great Success

Redefine your relationship with stress and transform potentially career-jeopardizing moments into opportunities for growth and resilience. By addressing stress proactively and focusing on individual needs and recovery styles, event professionals can ensure they are prepared to face any challenge with clarity, creativity, and calm.

Stress-proofing should be practiced daily. It isn't a check-the-box-and-done process. The five steps in this guide serve as a roadmap for surviving and thriving in the high-stress field of event professionals. You won't get it perfectly right, and that is okay.

## Life isn't about perfection.
## It's about moving in the right direction.

Hopefully, this guide and its five steps will help you find a path to low stress and great success.

If you'd like to dive deeper into mastering stress management and recovery, please visit the ***Stress-Proof Event Professional Resource Page*** at **StressProofEventPro.com**

There you'll find:

- More tips and resources
- A downloadable "cheat sheet" for the 5-step Event Stress relief card. It fits perfectly into the back of a name badge.
- Links to Eliz's books, including ***Stress-Proof Your Life***
- How to join Eliz's new **Stress-Proof Substack Community**

### This guide is an example of the customized stress programs Eliz delivers for her clients.

### Discover the Stress-Proof System's full potential, and consider inviting Eliz to speak at your next event.

She provides a **no-nonsense approach to stress management** specifically designed for people working in high-stress environments. They are a hit with technically-minded people, and one engineer describes her work as **"stress management for people who don't like Woo-Woo."**

# About Eliz Greene

Surviving a heart attack at age 35 while seven months pregnant with twins, Eliz knows stress management isn't a 'nice-to-have' but rather an essential survival skill. Just days after her heart stopped and she endured open heart surgery and a cesarean section delivery, Eliz held both her daughters together for the first time. Amazingly, despite the pain and uncertainty, what she felt most strongly was contentment. Her priorities were crystal clear. She knew she'd been given a second chance at life and a unique perspective for a reason. For over two decades, Eliz has been on a mission to inspire busy people to pay attention to their heart health. Recognizing stress as an essential and often under-addressed risk factor, Eliz conducted a research study on job stress. She developed the ***Stress-Proof System*** to protect high-performing people from the stress they can't avoid.

Eliz is an author and writes a Top Health and Wellness Blog. She was named a Top Online Influencer on Stress and Heart Health. She's appeared on CNN, PBS, Lifetime, TNT, and many national and local news programs. Eliz, a national spokesperson and advocate for the American Heart Association, received the Heart Hero Award in 2010. Organizations such as NASA and CVS have used her strategies to reduce workplace stress. Today, Eliz is happy and healthy, living and sailing in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with her wonderful husband, Clay.

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