

Stress Wisely: How to Be Well in an Unwell World

Robyne Hanley-Dafoe

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Robyne Hanley-Dafoe's self-help book *Stress Wisely* suggests taking a holistic approach to one's daily challenges.

The book first rethinks what stress means, sifting through theoretical work to assert that most people's understandings of what goes into stress are far too limited. To expand upon general understandings of stress as a phenomenon, Hanley-Dafoe names eight stress triggers before presenting methods for dealing with each. The resultant notions of wellness require both that people understand where they are struggling and that they have the courage to love themselves past their weak spots.

Set in the context of COVID-19, which left people "weary, wobbly, and discouraged," the book's arguments are supported both by personal references and by outside studies and resources. Hanley-Dafoe discusses the years of effort that she put toward understanding and addressing stress before arriving at this eight-pronged paradigm, which requires recognizing and appreciating that many people contend with monumental challenges in their lives. Further, the book notes that while some elements of stress might be universal, each person's "stress ecosystem" is unique.

Most of the book is consumed by an exploration of the eight-point framework, which is indeed useful when it comes to understanding the various ways that stress impacts individual people. There is a body, mind, and spirit element to this work—a constellation of ways to better understand the daily implications of stress. Issues of burnout and compassion fatigue are raised alongside a compact history of stress research to illuminating effect. The latter comes partially in the form of studies that show the "dual risk" nature of stress, where each person has different vulnerabilities and protective factors.

While science drives the book's self-help suggestions, self-deferential anecdotes are also present, and these more personal references humanize the otherwise formal material. For example, Hanley-Dafoe recalls confronting a fellow passenger on a flight about his flagrant disregard for mask protocol, showing how that connected to, and influenced, her feelings of stress. Still, while the information herein is made easy to understand—more so because Hanley-Dafoe's theories are presented in consumable sections with defined subheadings for clarity—the tips that are shared throughout are often familiar in form and delivery. They emphasize mindfulness and connection but do not always add to related discussions in fresh ways. Still, the prose is upbeat and approachable, and the book, on the whole, is appealing.

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JEREMIAH ROOD (March 23, 2023)

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