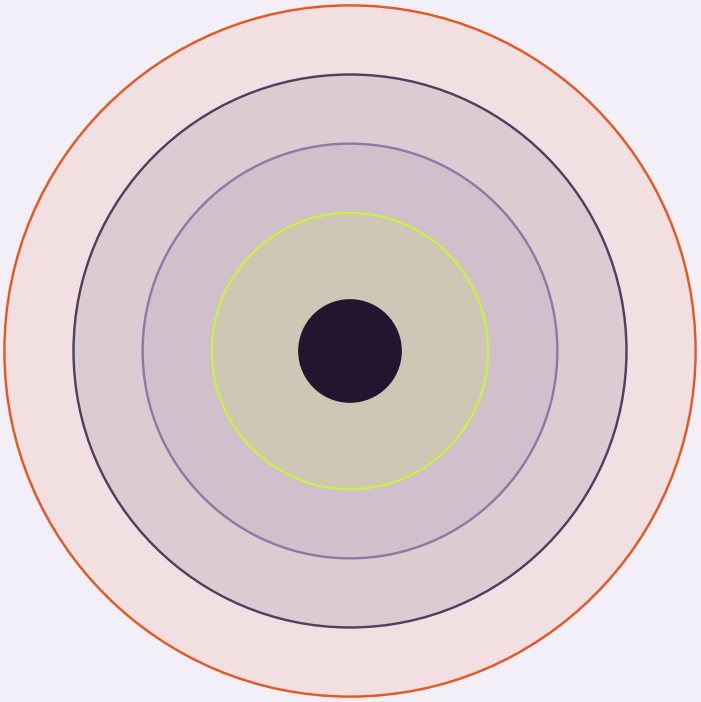


Par amour du stress

A reading of the book by Sonia Lupien (2020)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Par amour du stress, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Par amour du stress, which translates as For the Love of Stress, is a French-language book by Sonia Lupien, founder and director of the Centre for Studies on Human Stress (Centre d'études sur le stress humain), full professor of psychiatry at Université de Montréal and a researcher who has held a Canada Research Chair on human stress. It first appeared in 2010 and returned in a new edition from Éditions Va Savoir in Québec in November 2020, with added chapters on the past decade's research. Drawing on about twenty years of research and written with humour, it covers the causes, symptoms and long-term effects of stress. Its starting point is that stress is not an illness but a response essential to survival, one that evolved for threats like a mammoth. Whether stress helps or harms depends on how it is handled, and the book explains the hormonal and nervous systems behind the response. Prolonged stress is the kind it worries about, because it raises the risk of cardiovascular disease, depression and anxiety. A review in Zone Campus, the student paper of the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, found it technical and a little repetitive in places. An English translation, For the Love of Stress, has since been published by Va Savoir.

Below are the 8 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Stress is not an illness. It is a survival system doing its job.

Lupien's starting point turns the usual framing around. The stress response is not a fault to be cured but something essential to staying alive, and treating it as the enemy misses what it is for.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Your stress response was built for mammoths, not inboxes.

The publisher's description leans on a mammoth: the response evolved for threats that called for an immediate, physical answer. The same machinery now fires for deadlines, meetings and messages that no amount of running will solve.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Stress can help or harm. What decides it is how you handle it.

The book does not sort stress into good and bad piles. The same response that sharpens you for a challenge can wear you down, and the difference lies in how it is managed.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The stress worth worrying about is the kind that never switches off.

A short burst is the system working as designed. Prolonged stress is different: the book links it with a higher risk of cardiovascular disease, depression and anxiety, which is why the duration matters as much as the cause.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Stress is less frightening once you can see the machinery.

Lupien walks through the hormonal and nervous systems behind the stress response. The Zone Campus reviewer found these passages technical, but the payoff is a body you can understand rather than one that seems to turn on you.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Ask three questions of any stress: what set it off, what is it doing to you, and what will it do if it lasts?

The publisher describes the book as covering the causes, symptoms and long-term effects of stress. Read as a checklist, those three take a vague sense of being stressed and make it something you can look at.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

You can take stress seriously and still laugh at it.

The book is written with humour, which suits its argument. A response you can joke about is one you are not entirely at the mercy of.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Stress science keeps moving, and a good guide moves with it.

The 2020 edition added chapters on the decade of research since the first edition appeared in 2010. Even a book built on about twenty years of work treats its own picture as unfinished.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Name this week's mammoths
- [ ] Sort spikes from sieges
- [ ] Find one lever per stressor
- [ ] Ask for the missing information
- [ ] Keep a glossary while you read

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Close the loop after a spike
- ◯ Hold a weekly mammoth review
- ◯ Rehearse the new before it arrives

30 days · Nov 13 - Dec 12, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 13 - Dec 12, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Name this week's mammoths

Write down everything that has set off your stress response this week, big or small.

Run the biggest one through the sorter on this page.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Sort spikes from sieges

Next to each item on your list, mark whether it is a short spike that will pass or something that has gone on for weeks.

Give the long ones your attention first.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Find one lever per stressor

For each prolonged stressor, write one small thing that is within your control.

A first step you own beats a plan you are waiting on someone else to approve.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Ask for the missing information

When not knowing is the hard part, send the one question that would make it more predictable: a date, a decision, the next step.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Keep a glossary while you read

The book goes deep into the science.

Keep a page for each hormone or nervous-system term as you meet it, in your own words, so the later chapters land.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Close the loop after a spike

After a stressful moment passes, give your body a signal that it is over: a walk, a few slow breaths, a stretch.

Nov 13 - Dec 12, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6 ○
7 ○	8 ○	9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Hold a weekly mammoth review

Once a week, look back at your list.

Nov 13 - Dec 12, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Rehearse the new before it arrives

Before an unfamiliar situation, learn one thing about it ahead of time: visit the place, talk to someone who has done it, or walk through it once.

Nov 13 - Dec 12, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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30 ○						

December 2026

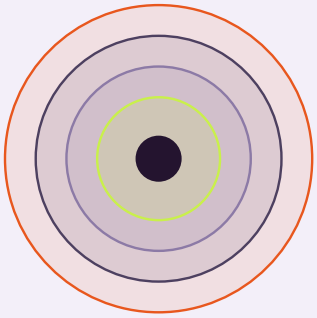
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



The mammoth was never the problem. Staying braced for it long after it has wandered off is.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER SONIA LUPIEN