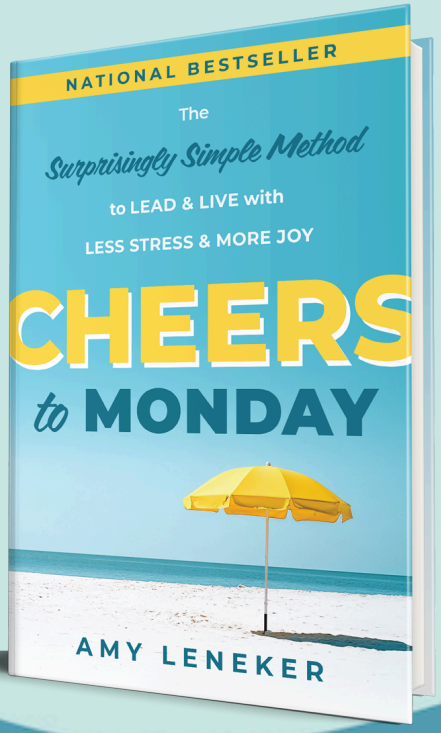
Cheers to Monday
Reading & Discussion Guides

Amy Leneker

Reflection and discussion questions for individuals, teams, organizations, and book clubs to take practical steps towards less stress and more joy.



Includes:

1. Individual Reflection Guide
2. Team Discussion Guide
3. Org. Discussion Guide
4. Book Club Discussion Guide
5. Un-Stressing Strategies

Companion to Amy's
Cheers to Monday

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Individual Reflection Guide

For individuals who want to examine their relationship with stress and take practical steps toward less stress and more joy.

In *Cheers to Monday*, Amy Leneker reveals how stress becomes embedded in our lives through habits, expectations, and unexamined beliefs about work and success. This reflection guide invites individuals to examine their own relationship with stress, uncover the stories that shape how they respond to pressure, and identify intentional ways to reduce stress and make room for more joy at work and beyond.

1. Leneker describes her early "stress story" as learning to work hard, not complain, and keep going. What stress story did you grow up with? How does it still show up in your life today?

2. What messages did you learn about joy? When do you notice yourself postponing joy ("after this deadline," "once things settle down")?

3. Which of the five types of work stress—**Schedule, Suspense, Social, Sudden, System** shows up most for you right now?

4. How do you typically respond when that type of stress appears? What patterns feel automatic?

Individual Reflection (Cont.)

5. Look at your calendar or a typical week. Where does your time align with what matters most to you—and where does it not?

6. Leneker writes that stress is normal, but normal doesn't mean healthy. How do you personally know when you are experiencing unhealthy stress?

7. What is one boundary you could put in place to reduce stress at work?

8. Where might asking for help change your stress experience?

9. As you think about leading and living with less stress, who could you ask for support and what would you ask for?

10. If you applied just one idea from *Cheers to Monday*, what would it be and how would you know it's working?

Team Discussion Guide

For team members who work together and want to experience less stress and more joy in their shared work.

In *Cheers to Monday,* Amy Leneker shows how stress spreads through teams—not just through workload, but through relationships, norms, and systems. This discussion guide helps in-tact teams explore how stress shows up in their shared experience, identify patterns that quietly drain energy, and discover practical ways to reduce stress and make more room for joy individually and together.



1. Stress Ruler: On a scale of 0–10, how challenging has your work stress been recently? What's contributing most to that number? How might we use the Stress Ruler as a shared language in our work together?

2. As a team, how comfortable are we talking openly about stress? What would make it easier to have conversations about stress?

3. Which of the five types of work stress—**Schedule, Suspense, Social, Sudden,** or **System**—shows up most for our team right now?

4. Stress isn't technically an emotion, but it spreads like one. Where do we notice stress spreading in our team during busy, uncertain, or high-pressure moments?

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Team Discussion (Cont.)

5. Leneker emphasizes that many stressors are systemic, not personal. Where do unclear roles, misaligned priorities, or broken processes create unnecessary stress for this team?

6. What stress have we quietly normalized as “just part of the job” that might actually be unhealthy or unsustainable?

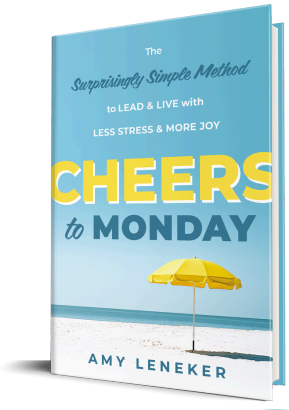
7. Where might we be unintentionally creating stress for one another—through habits, expectations, communication styles, or unspoken norms?

8. Asking for help is a leadership skill that strengthens teams. How comfortable are we asking for help early—before stress escalates—and what tends to get in the way?

9. Do we have shared agreements about stress, boundaries, or how we work together when pressure is high? If not, what agreements would help?

10. What is one small, realistic change we could commit to as a team to reduce stress right now—and how will we know it’s actually helping?

Additional Notes, Thoughts, and Questions:

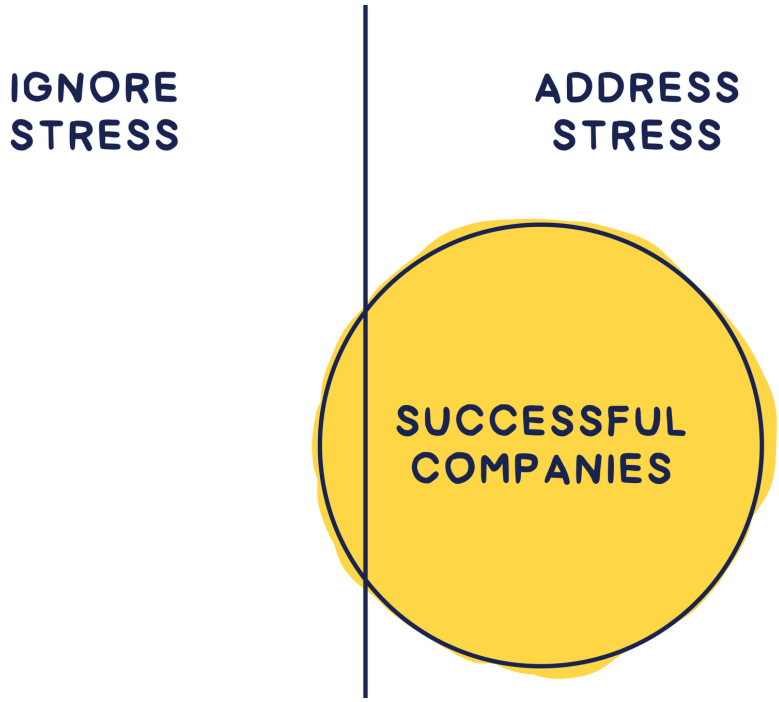


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Org. Discussion Guide

For leadership teams, HR, and organizational conversations about workplace culture.

In *Cheers to Monday*, Amy Leneker makes the case that stress is often a systems problem, not a personal resilience problem. This discussion guide supports organizational leaders in examining how structures, systems, and cultural norms contribute to chronic stress, and how intentional changes can reduce burnout, improve results, and create conditions where both people and performance can thrive.



1. Which of the five types of work stress—**Schedule, Suspense, Social, Sudden,** or **System**—are most prevalent in our organization right now?

2. Where do systems—not individual effort—create unnecessary stress?

3. What behaviors, processes, or expectations have become "the way things are," even though they increase stress?

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Org. Discussion (Cont.)

4. Leneker shares research that removing toxic behavior often delivers a greater return than recruiting top talent. Where might unaddressed social stress be quietly undermining performance or retention?

5. How does stress spread in this organization during change, crisis, or peak workload periods?

6. How are we gathering feedback from across the organization about stress? What could we be doing?

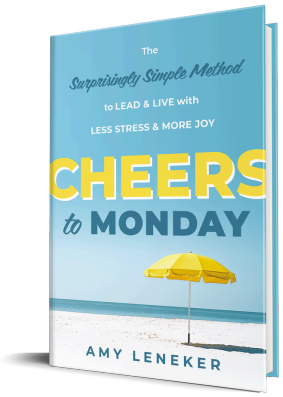
7. What resources do we have available for employees who need support managing stress? What are we doing to inform employees about those resources?

8. How can we equip supervisors and managers with the tools they need to reduce stress for themselves and their teams?

9. What would it look like to design work that reduces stress instead of relying on individuals to manage it?

10. If this organization committed to leading with less stress, what would need to change first?

Additional Notes, Thoughts, and Questions:



Book Discussion Guide

For book clubs and learning groups

In *Cheers to Monday*, Amy Leneker challenges the belief that stress is simply the price of success and offers a new way to think about work, leadership, and joy. This book club discussion guide encourages meaningful conversation, personal reflection, and shared insight as readers explore how stress shapes their lives—and how reducing stress can create space for more joy, connection, and purpose.

1. What idea or story from *Cheers to Monday* resonated with you most and why?

2. Which of the five types of work stress—**Schedule**, **Suspense**, **Social**, **Sudden**, or **System**—did you recognize most clearly in your own life?

3. How did the concept of "stress stories" change the way you think about your relationship with stress?

4. What did the book challenge or disrupt about how you define success?

5. Leneker writes that joy is often crowded out by stress, not absent. Where do you see that playing out in your own life?

6. What part of the book felt most validating? What part felt most uncomfortable?

7. How did the idea of "accept without fixing" land for you?

8. How might asking for help look different after reading this book?

9. How might you be unintentionally causing stress for yourself or others?

10. What does "less stress and more joy" realistically look like in your current season of life?

The 5 Types of Stress

In my work to better understand stress and joy at work, I led more than 150 interviews and focus groups with leaders and teams across industries, where clear patterns began to emerge.

I then led a national study on stress and joy at work, and the same patterns appeared—confirming that work stress isn't random and consistently shows up in five distinct types.

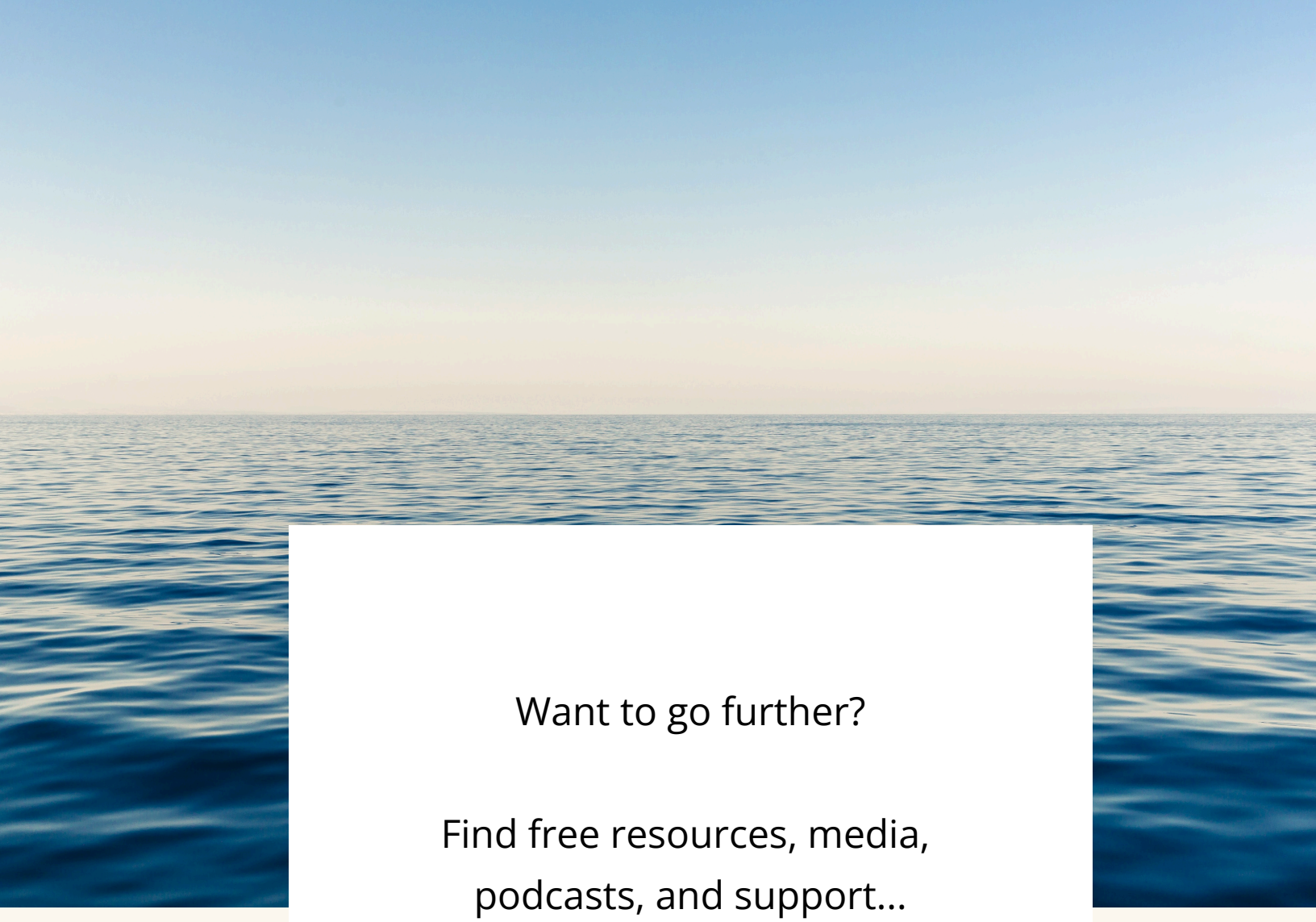
No.	Type of Stress	Description
1	**Schedule**	Stress from having too much to do and not enough time. Back-to- back meetings, endless commitments – you barely have a moment to breathe.
2	**Suspense**	Stress from waiting for what's uncertain or looming. The deadline, decision, or tough conversation isn't here yet, but the anticipation is already wearing on you.
3	**Social**	Stress from tension in relationships and team dynamics. You can feel it in the awkward silences, the unresolved conflict, and the energy it takes just to get through a meeting.
4	**Sudden**	Stress that arrives unannounced and demands a response. An urgent request, a last-minute change, or a full-blown emergency throws your day off course.
5	**System**	Stress from structures, processes, and culture. Unclear expectations, power imbalances, inequity, and inefficient processes that create stress across the organization.

NOTE: The first four types align with the work of Dr. Karl Albrecht, who, in 1979, identified four categories of stress in workplaces: time, anticipatory, encounter, and situational stress.

Excerpt adapted from *Cheers to Monday: The Surprisingly Simple Method to Lead and Live with Less Stress and More Joy* by Amy Leneker. Published by Wiley. Copyright 2026

Un-Stressing Strategies

No.	Type of Stress	Strategies to Consider
1	**Schedule**	• Conduct a calendar audit to identify unnecessary meetings. • Align your time with what actually matters instead of letting urgency set the agenda. • Adjust meeting default times to provide a 10-minute buffer.
2	**Suspense**	• Identify the ambiguity or missing information. • Seek information if available. • Focus on what you can control.
3	**Social**	• Address the issue. • Begin the conversation with curiosity, not judgment. • Agree on next steps moving forward.
4	**Sudden**	• Pause to ensure you're responding, not reacting. • Conduct a brief after-action review once the moment passes to name what happened, what was learned, and what you'd do differently next time. • Contain the disruption by deciding what this moment actually requires - and what it doesn't.
5	**System**	• Identify how systems are making work harder, not easier. • Interrupt the cycle of fixing around broken systems instead of fixing the systems themselves. • Protect energy by setting boundaries where the system has failed to set them for you.

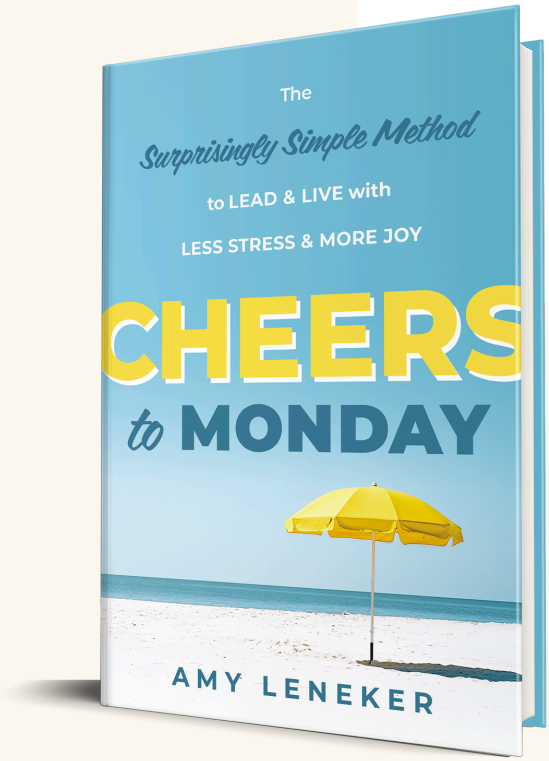


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