**STEPS IN WRITING AN ESSAY**

**FROM We Are America**  
By Anna Joy

**STEPS TO WRITING AN ESSAY**

The steps in the writing process that work for generating paragraphs also work for writing essays. Review them carefully each time you write.

The rest of this chapter illustrates how one student, Doug Gonzales, followed the steps from the initial idea to finished essay.

**STEP ONE: Developing a Topic**

As an assignment in his English class, Doug Gonzales was asked to write a paper on stress. He remembered a journal entry he had written on the article, “Get Found, Kid!” (See Chapter 2). He reread the entry and underlined ideas he thought would make good topics.

I really enjoyed reading about all those kids who got found. It makes me wish I had time to get in a big pile and hug everybody! But who has time??? I have no time at all for myself, much less a pile of strangers. I mean, it’s 9 P.M. and I’ve been up since 6 A.M. STRESS!!! I wake up, still tired. At school I get stressed. My girl friend threatens to break up with me if I don’t spend more time with her. My mom gets on my case about yard work. My boss says I have to work harder. I have to find some way to relax, right? **We cope with stress in different ways.** I used to smoke. Now I exercise to escape stress. Some people take drugs, others drink beer. Not me, that’s just another kind of stress. Gotta go now — I’ve got math homework and more STRESS!!!

Doug reviewed the ideas he had underlined and saw he had several possible topics for his paper. He drew up the following list of possible topics.

1. We cope with stress in different ways.
2. I give up a lot to go to school. (This topic came from Doug’s journal entry statement that he had no time at all for himself.)
3. The stress in my life comes from school, my girl friend, my mom, and my boss.
4. I have several ways of coping with stress. (The topic idea came to Doug when he read his entry notes about smoking and exercise.)

His work with the next step, “Thinking about Your Audience,” helped him choose a focus for his essay.

**For Practice**

**Exercise 5a.** Spend ten minutes writing whatever comes to mind about one of the following topics. When the time is up, reread what you have written and underline possible ideas for essay topics. Then list several topics you could discuss in an essay.

- problems in my community
- drug use in schools
- looking for careers
- restaurant food

**STEP TWO: Thinking about Your Audience**

Doug answered a few questions to help him picture his reader and select a topic for his essay:

**What subject do I want to write about?**  
Coping with stress.

**Who am I writing for and why did I choose this audience?**  
My classmates are my audience. They have some of the stresses I have and should appreciate the subject.

**What is the main idea I want to communicate to my audience?**  
I want students to see that there are several ways to cope with stress.

After answering his questions, Doug reread the four topics he had written for step one and selected the first topic, “We cope with stress in different ways,” as the most appropriate for his audience and purpose.
Exercise 5b. Use the questions Doug used and those in Appendix A, “Preliminary Questions for Writing,” to narrow one of the topics you listed in Exercise 5a.

STEP THREE: Preliminary Writing

In the diagram at the beginning of this chapter you saw that paragraphs are composed of general statements (topic sentences) supported by subtopics, which are, in turn, supported by details, examples, and explanations. Preliminary writing techniques (introduced in chapter 3) are useful tools for generating supporting information for your paragraphs.

When Doug Gonzales reached this point in his writing, he asked himself what information his readers would need to know about ways to cope with stress. To answer that question, he considered the options outlined in chapter 3:

- Ask additional questions
- Draw an idea wheel
- List ideas

Doug decided to draw an idea wheel first to help him visualize his ideas about coping with stress. His idea wheel shows his topic, subtopic, and some supporting details.

Coping with Stress

For Practice

Next, Doug listed his ideas. He saw that he could group some of them according to forms of exercise, and legal and illegal drugs.

Coping with Stress

Exercise:
- Training
- Biking

Sleep

Meditation

Using legal drugs:
- Smoking
- Drinking

Using illegal drugs:
- Cocaine

Overeating

Shopping

Music

TV:
- Sitcoms
- Sports

Sex

For Practice

Exercise 5c. Rearrange Doug’s list of ideas so that it begins with what you consider the least effective methods for coping with stress and ends with the more important methods.

Doug thought he probably had more ideas than he could write about in detail. To help him decide which ones he could actually support, he read his list again, asking himself additional questions formed from some of the journalists’ questions—who, what, where, when, why, and how.

What kind of exercise works?
Exercise is an easy topic; I’ve got lots to say about the exercise program I use. I do weight lifting and aerobics, and I also bike, play racquetball, and swim.
**How do people use meditation and sleep to relax?**

Marlease does meditation, and maybe I can ask her what it is like. I’m not sure I can say much about this topic, though. I don’t think I have much to say about sleep, either.

**What do I have to say about taking drugs, drinking, or smoking?**

I used to smoke, so I can talk about my experiences, and I have some ideas about cocaine use. Maybe I can use my ex-friend Ricky as an example of a person who used drugs to relax. I know people at work who drink to cope with their stress.

**Who do I know that overeats?**

I have a cousin who overeats. That’s not a good way to deal with stress, though. I’ll have to see whether that fits.

**How does shopping relieve stress?**

I’m not sure I can say much about shopping. My mom shops for relaxation, but I think this idea doesn’t seem very interesting to me now.

**Who do I know that listens to music to relax and what kind of music works for them?**

For music, Mom and Dad listen to Mexican-style music to relax, my little brother listens to rap, and I like salsa.

**Who uses television to cope with stress? What do they watch?**

Everyone in my family watches television to relax. My parents watch soaps. I watch a variety of programs like *Cosby*, sports, and *Roseanne*.

**How can I work “sex” into my paper?**

Sex might make a good conclusion – it’s catchy.

By asking himself questions, Doug was able to identify topic ideas and supporting examples for paragraphs about watching television, exercising, listening to music, and using drugs as ways to relieve stress.

**Exercise 5d.** Look again at the topics you created for Exercise 5a. Choose one of your topics and draw an idea wheel, ask yourself questions, or make a list of ideas in preparation for writing an essay. Appendix B of the book, “Questions for Expanding Ideas,” gives you additional journalistic questions.

**STEP FOUR: Organizing Ideas**

The two-step process of grouping ideas by subtopics and arranging them according to a logical pattern works as well for essays as it does for paragraphs. In fact, you will probably spend more time doing preliminary writing when working on an essay simply because it is longer and the task is necessarily more complex.

Doug had already done some organizing by the time he got to Step Four. By drawing his idea wheel, arranging his thoughts in a list, and deciding to omit some ideas while expanding others, he was already making choices about the content of his paper and the order of his ideas.

He was able to organize his ideas even more clearly when he noticed that the ways of relieving stress in his list of ideas were either healthy or unhealthy. He made these the main categories for his essay because he could arrange all the subtopics under these two headings.

In addition, Doug planned his introduction. To get the reader’s attention, he thought he might use the brief scenes in his original journal entry on stress to recreate the feeling of stress for his reader.

**Creating a Thesis**

At this stage in the writing process, it is a good idea to create at least a tentative thesis to help you stay on track as you generate and arrange ideas for the essay. The thesis statement tells your reader what you intend to discuss in the essay. To create you thesis, you may find it useful to ask yourself (as Doug did earlier) what the main idea is that you want to communicate to your audience. When Doug originally thought about his audience and asked himself this question (see Step Two above), he answered that he wanted students to see that there are many ways to cope with stress. Then, after completing Step Three and part of Step Four, he
knew his thesis would include healthy and unhealthy ways of relieving stress, so he revised his original answer to read: I want to discuss both healthy and unhealthy ways of coping with stress. With this purpose in mind, Doug wrote the following thesis: People have different ways of relieving stress, but some are healthier than others.

Arranging Ideas

Once Doug had a tentative thesis, he rearranged his ideas as either harmful or healthy ways to relieve stress. Using the order-of-importance organizational pattern, he began with the more negative ideas—legal and illegal drugs—and ended with the more positive ways to relieve stress. He wanted to discuss exercise last because he considered it the most positive way to cope with stress, and he felt he had the most to say about it.

Next, Doug created the following outline for his paper. To help him see the levels of his ideas—from the most general to the most specific—he numbered them using an arabic numeral one for the thesis, two’s for topic ideas, three’s for subtopics, and four’s, five’s, and six’s for the more specific details.

Outline on Relieving Stress

1. Thesis: People have different ways of relieving stress, but some are healthier than others
   2. Unhealthy, even harmful ways of dealing with stress
      3. Drugs
         4. Ricky
      5. Drug test at work
   3. Drinking beer
   4. People at work
   5. Smoking
      4. My experience
   2. Healthy ways to relieve stress
      3. Television shows
         4. Mom and Dad
         5. Mexican soaps
      4. I watch my own programs
         5. Sports
         5. Cosby
      5. Roseanne
   3. Music
      4. Mom and Dad listen to Mexican music like mariachis
      4. My little brother listens to rap
      4. I like salsa
   3. Exercise
      4. Jogging
      4. My plan for exercise
         5. Basic training workout
         6. Aerobics
      6. Weights
      5. Racquetball
      5. Swimming
      5. Biking
         6. Long-distance
         6. Leisure
   3. Sex as a way to relax

Once he had revised his outline, Doug was ready to write a draft.

For Practice

Exercise 5e. Spend about half an hour grouping your ideas and writing an outline for the information you gathered during your practice with Step Three, Preliminary Writing. You will probably need to write several drafts of the outline. Once you have an outline, number the thesis, topic sentences, subtopics, and details from general (1, 2, and 3) to specific (4, 5, and 6).
STEP FIVE: Writing a Fast Draft

When writing a fast draft, keep your outline by your side, and write ideas quickly, recognizing that you will rework them later. Here is Doug’s fast draft:

Stress!!!

I just got home from work its 9 P.M. and I’ve been up since 6 A.M. I am stressed out!! I think I have good reasons for feeling this way. This was my day. I wake up, and I’m still tired from the day before. I go to school, and my teacher told me I have to work just a little harder if I want to pass the class (STRESS!!). I went to work and my boss says he has some complaints about me (STRESS!!). Finally, at 9 P.M. I get to go home after a long, stressful day. I walk in the door and the first thing my mom says is that the yard looks terrible. When do I have time to clean the yard? (STRESSS!!) This is just an example of my very stressful day. With all these “highs” going on in my life. How do I come back down? What are some ways other people come back down? People have different ways of relieving stress, but some are healthier than others.

Some ways of relieving stress are unhealthy, even harmful. Take drugs, for example. My friend Ricky is a perfect example of someone who used cocaine and eventually lost his job. One day his employer make him take a drug test. Ricky got fired. I also have a stressful job. When 5 P.M. rolls around, most people I work with say “It’s beer time.” That is just another way people cope with stress they drink beer. I think stress is one of the big reasons people start smoking. I used to smoke. A cigeret always seemed to calm me right down. It will also kill you.

My whole family watches television to relax and forget about work. Mom and Dad watch Mexican soaps. I watch my own programs—sports is my favorite, but I also like the Cosby Show and Roseanne. Music is another way my family has of relaxing. Mom and Dad listen to Mexican music like mariachi bands, my little brother, Ray, likes rap, and I listen to salsa.

The best way to handle stress, I have found, is through exercise. I found a workout system that works for me. I like to play racquetball and do whats called “Basic Training Workout.” A complete workout system that deals with everything from aerobics to weight training. I take long bike rides. Especially in the evening. And some times I swim at the Y.

I wasn’t going to mention sex, but sex is one of the most common ways people relieve stress. It’s good exercise, too, you feel good, and its a healthy activity that relieves stress. I guess we all have our own ways of coping.

For Practice

Exercise 5f. Use the outline you wrote for step four to write a fast draft of an essay.

STEP SIX: Editing and Proofreading

This is an important step in the writing process, and one that beginning writers should never omit. Editing involves reading your essay as a whole and making substantial changes in the way your ideas are arranged or developed. A thorough editing involves the following procedures:

1. Writing an outline of your essay to see if your ideas follow a distinct chronological or spatial order, or if you have arranged them clearly according to their order of importance.
2. Moving sentences and paragraphs, adding examples, and deleting information when such changes make your ideas clearer.
3. Rewriting sentences that do not say quite what you mean.

When you proofread, you look more closely at individual words, phrases and sentences. Your goal is to find and correct errors in grammar, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Exercises in Part Three of this book give you practice checking for grammar mistakes and errors in sentence structure. Chapter 27 provides a summary of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization rules. You may wish to refer to these rules as you proofread your essays. It is also useful to
keep the following suggestions in mind when you are proofreading.

1. Proofread your essay several times, checking for words and phrases you may have omitted in your fast draft.

2. Keep a list of mistakes that recur in your writing, and when you proofread, go through your essay looking for each error one at a time. If you know, for example, that you have difficulty writing parallel sentences and using commas correctly, read your essay once to check the logic of your sentences; then read it a second time to catch errors in comma usage. (Chapter 27 provides a useful list of rules for using commas correctly.)

3. Read your essay aloud and, if you can, tape record it. The procedure usually makes writers look more carefully at what they have written.

4. After proofreading your essay on your own, share your writing with another student. Like most people, you may not be able to catch all the errors in your own writing; that’s why sharing writing (Step Seven in the writing process) is another good way of finding mistakes.

Study the following description of Doug Gonzales’ considerations as he applied these editing and proofreading techniques to his essay on ways to relieve stress.

When he had finished writing his fast draft, Doug read his paper out loud to make sure he had included his topics and subtopics, and that each supported his thesis. He noticed that he needed a topic sentence in paragraph three showing the transition from unhealthy to healthy coping with stress. He also decided to put the events in the introduction in chronological order according to when they occur on an average weekday. Overall, he was pleased with the order of ideas in the body paragraphs, but he made a note to add more information because they sounded sketchy and rushed. He wasn’t altogether happy with the conclusion, either, but decided to wait and see what his readers would say when he shared his essay with other students.

Doug read his essay again to catch words he might have left out and find mistakes in sentence structure (he knew he had to watch for run-ons and fragments particularly) or punctuation. He also looked up the spelling for “cigarette.” Here is his revised draft with the changes underlined.

Stress!!

I just got home from work. It’s 9 P.M. and I’ve been up since 6 A.M. I am stressed out!! I think I have good reasons for feeling this way. This was my day. I woke up, and I was still tired from the day before. I went to school, and my teacher told me I have to work just a little harder if I want to pass the class (STRESS!!). I went to work, and my boss said he has had some complaints about me last week (STRESS!!). Finally, at 9 P.M. I went home after a long, stressful day. I walked in the door, and the first thing my mom said was that the yard looks terrible. “When do you have time to clean the yard?” she asked me (STRESS!!). This is just an example of my very stressful day. With all these “highs” going on in my life, how do I come back down? What are some ways other people come back down? People have cope with stress in many different ways of relieving stress, but some are healthier than others.

Some ways of relieving stress are unhealthy, even harmful. Take Drugs, for example, are very harmful. My friend Ricky is a perfect example of someone who used cocaine and eventually lost his job over it. One day his employer made him take a drug test, and Ricky got fired. I also have a stressful job with an insurance agency. I am constantly dealing with angry claimants. When 5 P.M. rolls around, most people I work with say “It’s beer time.” That is just another way people cope with stress. They drink beer. I think stress is one of the big main reasons why people start smoking. I used to smoke. A cigarette always seemed to calm me right down. Of course it will also kill you me.

Many people have found healthier ways to escape the stresses we all fight every day. My whole family watches television to relax and forget about work. Mom and Dad, for instance,
watch Mexican soaps. I watch my own programs—sports is my favorite, but I also like the Cosby Show and Roseanne. Music is another way my family has of relaxing. Mom and Dad listen to Mexican music like mariachi bands, my little brother, Ray, likes rap, and I listen to salsa.

The best way to handle stress, I have found, is through exercise. I found have a workout system that works is perfect for me. I like to play racquetball and do what’s called “Basic Training Workout,” a complete workout system that deals with everything from aerobics to weight training. I also like to take long bike rides, especially in the evening, and sometimes I swim at the Y.

I wasn’t going to mention sex, but Sex is one of the most common ways people relieve stress. It’s good exercise, too, you feel good, and it’s a healthy activity that relieves stress. I guess we all have our own ways of coping with stress.

For Practice

Exercise 5g. Edit the fast draft you wrote for Exercise 5f by checking paragraphs for (1) topic sentences that support your thesis; (2) logical sequence of ideas between sentences and paragraphs; and (3) examples and explanations that support subtopics. Proofread for (1) words omitted; (20 sentence errors; and (3) punctuation and spelling errors.

STEP SEVEN: Sharing Your Writing

At first, the idea of sharing what you have written with other students may make you uncomfortable or may even seem frightening. But once you have done it a few times, you will find that your fellow students can give you support and encouragement as well as good suggestions for clarifying your ideas. Sharing your writing is also beneficial because you can see how other students write. As a result, you may discover ways of organizing and developing ideas that you can use in future papers.

During an in-class workshop, Doug and two of his classmates shared ideas about their work. They used the following questionnaire to comment on each other’s essays. (These questions are reproduced in Appendix C [of the book].)

Questions for Sharing Writing

1. What did you like about the essay you read?  
Doug was pleased that both of his readers liked the opening of his essay. One classmate commented: “I get stressed out just reading this.” That was exactly the effect Doug wanted. The other student wrote, “I liked seeing some of the ways that I relax. He had a pretty good list.... It was good to put the drugs in there, too, because so many people use drugs to escape, and those can be dangerous.” The readers also thought the essay was well organized and that the transitions made Doug’s paragraphs easy to follow.

2. Does the opening paragraph get you interested? Explain why or why not.  
Both students thought the introduction to Doug’s essay was one of the strong points because it put them in the mood to read about stress.

3. Does the introduction include the main point of the paper—its thesis—either stated or implied?  
Both readers agreed that the thesis was the last sentence in the introduction. One student suggested that Doug write a more specific thesis mentioning the ways of coping with stress that he discusses in the paper. One student thought he asked so many questions near the end of the introduction that she couldn’t be sure which one he was going to answer in the paper.

Doug thought about this criticism and made a late change. He crossed out the questions “How do I come back down?” and “What are some ways other people come back down?” and wrote this tentative thesis: “If you are a student, you probably have some of the same pressures in your life that I have, and like me, you must find ways to cope with stress. Unfortunately, some ways of relieving stress are more harmful than helpful. The trick is to avoid those unhealthy ways (drug use) and find healthy ways (like music and exercise) to relieve stress.”
4. Were there any general ideas that you would like to have more information about, and why?
   One reader listed “workout system.” She couldn’t tell whether the workout system was Doug’s own creation or if it was part of the “basic training workout” at a gym. Another reader asked, “How does all this reduce stress?”
   In responding to these comments, Doug explained which exercises he does during different seasons of the year—the basic training workout is just one part of his year-round exercise program.
   In response to the other student’s comment, he reread the paper to see which stress-relieving activities he needed to explain more fully.
5. Were there paragraphs that seemed off topic and unrelated to the thesis?
   Students agreed that the paragraphs were about either unhealthy or healthy ways to relieve stress.
6. Were there places you had difficulty following the ideas or reading the sentences?
   One student wrote that Doug’s essay “jumped around too much—from drugs to drinking to smoking, and then from TV to music.”
   In response, Doug decided to add transitions and additional information, but he wanted to discuss this comment with his teacher first.
7. Does the paper come to a logical conclusion? What is it?
   Doug’s readers talked about better ways to end the paper. One wrote that “it just seems to stop.” Another reader suggested he bring in the two ideas in his thesis.
8. Is there anything you would like to ask the writer or any additional point you would like to make?
   One student said, “I had trouble with the topic in the last paragraph. I agree that sex can be relaxing, but it’s not always that ‘healthy’.” Doug’s other reader added, “AIDS and other diseases can make sex very unhealthy.”
   Doug decided that he hadn’t really felt comfortable discussing sex in the first place; he felt it was too complex an issue for him to deal with in this essay, and so he omitted it from the draft of his essay.

Teacher’s Conference

Doug scheduled an appointment with his teacher to go over some of the comments he received during the student workshop. When he asked about his classmate’s feeling that the essay “jumped around too much,” his teacher suggested that his readers may have felt he jumped around because he didn’t give much detail about the subtopics, particularly in the last few paragraphs. She agreed that adding transitions and explanations would clarify connections between his ideas.
   After his meeting with his teacher, Doug changed his essay to explain in greater detail how watching a program on television, listening to music, or exercising relieves tension. Because of the added explanations, he divided his third paragraph and wrote a separate paragraph on television and another on music.
   Doug also reorganized the paragraph on drugs in order to begin with legal drugs and end with the most harmful addiction—Ricky’s cocaine habit. After writing a reorganized draft of the paragraph, Doug decided to write a separate paragraph on Ricky.

For Practice

Exercise 5h. Take the draft that you edited and proofread, and share it with a few of your classmates. Use the list of questions for responding to essays in Appendix C [of the book], “Questions for Shared Writing.” When you have completed the questionnaire in Appendix C [of the book], answer these additional questions:

1. What is the most important thing you learned about your draft?

2. What changes will you make as a result of other students’ comments?
Coping with Stress

I just got home from work. It’s 9 P.M., and I’ve been up since 6 A.M. I am stressed out!! I think I have good reasons for feeling this way. This was my day. When I woke up, and I was still tired from the day before. I went to school, and my math teacher told me I have to work just a little harder if I want to pass the class (STRESS!!). I arrived at work, and my boss said he had some complaints about me last week (STRESS!!). Finally, at 9 P.M. I went home after a long, stressful day. I walked in the door, and the first thing my mom said was, that “The yard looks terrible. When do you have time to clean it?” she asked me (STRESS!!) With all these “highs” going on in my life, how do I come back down? What are some ways other people come back down? People cope with stress in many different ways, but some are healthier than others. If you are a student, you probably have some of the same pressures in your life, and, like me, you must find ways to cope with stress. The trick is to avoid the more harmful methods of relieving stress, like taking drugs, and to find healthier outlets, like music and exercise, to relieve stress.

Some ways of relieving stress are unhealthy, even harmful. Drugs, for example, are very harmful. My friend Rickey is a perfect example of someone who misused drugs, and eventually lost his job because of them. He had a very stressful job and used cocaine to escape. At work he spent eight hours a day loading trucks as fast as he could. By the time he got home, he was dead tired. To feel better, he started using cocaine. At first no one knew, not even his friends. Then he got careless and began using it at work to keep himself going. One day his employer made him take a drug test, and Ricky got fired. He not only lost his job but also changed his life for the worse. Last time I heard he was in jail on a drugs charge.

Illegal drugs can be even more damaging. My friend Ricky is a perfect example of someone who misused drugs and eventually lost his job because of them. He had a very stressful job and used cocaine to escape. At work he spent eight hours a day loading trucks as fast as he could. By the time he got home, he was dead tired. To feel better, he started using cocaine. At first no one knew, not even his friends. Then he got careless and began using it at work to keep himself going. One day his employer made him take a drug test, and Ricky got fired. He not only lost his job but also changed his life for the worse. Last time I heard he was in jail on a drugs charge.

Many people My family and I have found healthier ways to escape the stresses we all fight every day, like taking drugs, and to find healthier outlets, like music and exercise, to relieve stress. Some ways of relieving stress are unhealthy, even harmful. Drugs, for example, are very harmful. My friend Rickey is a perfect example of someone who misused drugs and eventually lost his job because of them. He had a very stressful job and used cocaine to escape. At work he spent eight hours a day loading trucks as fast as he could. By the time he got home, he was dead tired. To feel better, he started using cocaine. At first no one knew, not even his friends. Then he got careless and began using it at work to keep himself going. One day his employer made him take a drug test, and Ricky got fired. He not only lost his job but also changed his life for the worse. Last time I heard he was in jail on a drugs charge.

People cope with stress in many different ways, but some are healthier than others. If you are a student, you probably have some of the same pressures in your life, and, like me, you must find ways to cope with stress. The trick is to avoid the more harmful methods of relieving stress, like taking drugs, and to find healthier outlets, like music and exercise, to relieve stress.
between where the manager, the pitcher, and catcher are figuring out what to do.

New Paragraph

Music is another way my family has of relaxing. Mom, Dad, and my sister listen to Mexican music. Dad likes Carlos Guardel, who sings love songs and ballads that remind him of Mexico. Mom and my sister Ida enjoy listening to mariachi bands, that wonderful music from the Mexican Revolution. My little brother, Ray, likes rap music. I have no idea how he is able to relax while that is on, but he just loves it and seems to be in a world of his own as he listens to his headphones, and I am a little older than Ray, and I am happiest listening to salsa, especially the music of Ruben Blades. Music is a great way of taking your mind off your troubles.

The best way to handle stress, I have found, is through exercise. I have a workout system that is perfect for me. My family joined the YMCA a few years ago, and I have been going regularly since I stopped smoking. In the winter months I swim at the Y, play racquetball on weekends, and do what’s called a “Basic Training Workout” during the week. The program at the Y offers a complete workout system that deals with everything from aerobics to weight training, and it always ends with a long period of stretching. When summer comes and the weather is right, I also like to take long bike rides, especially in the evening, and sometimes I swim at the Y. When I ride on those warm nights, the summer breeze is very soothing, and my body always feels better for the exercise.

Sex is one of the most common ways people relieve stress. It’s good exercise, too, you feel good, and it’s a healthy activity that relieves stress. I guess we all have our own ways of coping with stress.

With the stress most of us have in our lives, we must find ways to calm down without threatening our health. My family and I find watching television and listening to music effective ways to forget about our problems. Exercise, however, offers the best alternative for me because it makes me feel equal to my tasks at work and school.

And here’s Doug’s final, corrected essay.
One day his employer made him take a drug test, and Ricky got fired. He not only lost his job but also changed his life for the worse. Last time I heard he was in jail on a drugs charge.

My family and I have found healthier ways to relieve stress. We often watch television to relax and forget about work. Mom and Dad, for instance, watch Mexican soaps. My mom, especially, gets very involved with the characters’ lives and forgets about her own aches and pains. I watch my own programs—sports is my favorite. I love to watch golf games because the players aren’t like football players who try to knock each other down. Instead, golf is a slow-moving sport that requires a lot of thinking and concentration. Besides, the setting is always beautiful and makes me feel at ease. I also enjoy watching baseball because even though it is exciting when your team gets a double play or their opponents score a home run, there are still long stretches in between where the manager, pitcher, and catcher are figuring out what to do.

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With the stress most of us have in our lives, we must find ways to calm down without threatening our health. My family and I find watching television and listening to music effective ways to forget about our problems. Exercise, however, offers the best alternative for me because it makes me feel equal to my tasks at work and school.

For Practice

Exercise 5i. Use the comments you received from fellow students and your teacher, and any additional insights you have had yourself, to make one or two revisions of your paper.

Exercise 5j. Exchange your draft and final revision with a fellow student. Identify the changes the student made, and explain the effects of each.