

## REVIEW

# The WellBe

## Put stress to the test

BY MICHAEL A. MILLER



Have you ever suddenly realized you were clenching your fingers during a conversation with your boss? Some physiological signs of chronic stress easily go unnoticed, making it important to recognize your stressors and react mindfully. This is easier said than done, of course. So, could we all benefit from a device that alerts us to our own unique stress patterns? We reviewed a new stress-detecting wearable to find out.

Enter the WellBe, a smart bracelet that monitors your heart rate variability (HRV), which is a robust metric of stress levels. It cross-references that data with your calendar and GPS location to help pinpoint the people, places, and times of day that send you into a tailspin of fight-or-flight symptoms. Over time, you should learn what (and who) to avoid, and cultivate mindfulness habits to reduce the stress you can't simply sidestep.

Unfortunately, the WellBe only partially delivers on its promise to identify the stressors in your life. It only calculates your HRV for three minutes each hour. That means if you get fired at 2:15 p.m. and meet your arch-nemesis for a triple espresso at 2:30, the WellBe will not create data points for these calendar events and locations. You may never know that the Starbucks on 2nd Avenue is a torture house for your sympathetic nervous system.

But according to WellBe co-founder Zach Sivan, acute stress events aren't the problem—we all get them—it's when they fester or become repetitive that they represent serious health risks. In other words, the WellBe attempts to identify and relieve chronic stress, not the string of expletives that reverberate after a stubbed toe. "In this respect, the sampling of once an hour is sufficient to determine if you are experiencing chronic stress versus single stressful events," he said. In my experience, the WellBe does do a good job of depicting chronic stress patterns via daily, weekly, and monthly timelines found in the app.

Where the WellBe truly shines, however, is stress reduction. When the WellBe detects a stress level of 60 percent or above, the app dishes out personalized meditations and classes from experts at the Mentor's Channel, ranging from 5 to 20-plus minutes. When the meditation ends, the user is presented with a bar graph of their pre- and post meditation stress.

### DETAILS:

- **BATTERY LIFE:** 3 days
- **PLATFORM:** iPhone and Android
- **PRICE:** \$149
- **WEBSITE:** [thewellbe.com](http://thewellbe.com)

Whether it's a guided meditation on gratitude, a pep talk for your next big meeting, or just some soothing background music, the app offers stunning and effective meditations to defuse any stressful situation. The meditations were always calming, so in this respect the WellBe had a tangible effect on my stress. You can also meditate at any time by tapping the app's "Relax" tile (which I found myself doing on multiple occasions).

Setup and pairing with your smartphone is easy enough, and upon donning the bracelet you'll immediately notice that the WellBe is effortless to wear. The lightweight cork strap is unobtrusive, elegant, and eco-friendly—removing cork from oak trees is actually healthy for the trees. You'll soon forget you even have it on, which is a relief because wearing a device that monitors your emotional state is inherently a bit stressful at first.

As a pioneer of stress-reducing wearables, the WellBe is not without its limitations. The location and calendar integration are fraught with unrealized potential, so don't expect to use your data to justify a friend break-up. But the WellBe made me more cognizant of my stress and helped me form mindful habits. Ultimately, the WellBe is perfect for anyone looking to keep tabs on their stress and inject a little on-the-go mindfulness into their busy lives. 🌸