

Author explains stress-relief method called 'fredding'

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Stress-relieving methods number many. They run the gamut from such old standbys as nail biting, Scotch drinking and punching a life-size inflatable Mr. T doll to more New Age-y techniques like lighting aromatherapy candles and listening to whale-mating calls on CD.

But saying "Fred"?

Author David L. Mocknick says the name Fred — derived from Frederick, a German moniker that means "peace ruler" — has curative powers. And he's developed a whole system to prove it that he explains in his recent book, "Who's Fred, Ha!: Silly, but Fun Stress Relief" (Clear Brook, \$17.95).

Fredding (which can be done in solitaire but works best in a group setting) begins when someone "baits" another person by getting him or her to say a word that rhymes with Fred. When the target — a waitress in a diner who suggests bread when asked for an alternative to rolls, for example — falls into the trap, the Fredder calls out, "Bread! Fred! Who's Fred, ha!"

It's not science, admits Mocknick. "I'm no psychologist and I don't have a medical background," says the 47-year-old Philadelphia-based literary agent. "But I've seen it work firsthand."