

Relax for the Health of It

The warm summer months have finally arrived and hopefully you have scheduled some time to relax and have fun. Relaxation is not only fun but also essential to our physical and mental health. If you are not spending time each day relaxing, this may be a good time to start or resume this practice as a defense against stress.

Stress has been called the “hidden epidemic” because it affects so many people. Studies have indicated that 75 percent of health problems have been linked directly or indirectly to stress. Stress contributes to many forms of disease in the body. Some of these include high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, asthma,

low back pain, skin rashes, cancer, obesity, depression, peptic ulcers, mental health problems, accidents, renal failure, multiple sclerosis, headaches, spastic colon and more.

The technology of modern society was intended to give us free time and make life easier and for the most part, it has, but now we are stressed out because of traffic, pollution, high cost of living noise and fumes in the city, unemployment and a variety of fears for our safety, the Corona-virus.

The level of stress in our lives depends on our interpretations of the events. John Milton said, “The mind is its own place and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.” When we

are feeling stressed, we need to ask ourselves, “What else could this mean? Is there another way I could look at this so I could feel comfortable? What could be good about this challenge?”

Whenever we experience a situation that seems either physically or the “fight or flight response”

which triggers an increase in our blood pressure, heart rate, rate of breathing, blood flow to the muscles and metabolism which prepare us for conflict or escape. We can also produce the same effect by rehearsing conflicts and problems in our minds. Emotions such as anger, worry, resentment, jealousy and fear can create the same reaction.

We also possess an innate protective mechanism against “overstress,” which allows us to counteract the negative effects of the fight or flight response. It is called the “Relaxation Response.” During relaxation, the heart rate decreases, metabolism is lowered, rate of breathing decreases and the body is restored to a healthier balance.

There are healthful ways to achieve relaxation. The mind has the ability to create the relaxation response, and we can use techniques and environments to trigger that response. The main criteria is that instead of thinking stressful thoughts, you are having a pleasant experience. You may want to close your eyes as you imagine yourself relaxing at the seashore, feeling the warmth of the sun and the gentle breeze on your skin. We cannot always be on vacation physically, but we can take mental vacations for relaxation.

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Change: Crisis or Opportunity?

You may compare this Change to the Coronavirus...

We live in a rapidly changing world, a time of constant and unexpected change. The pace of change seems to be accelerating. Who ever would have expected the Coronavirus to impact our lives the way it has? These changes have created new stresses in the way we live. Not only are major changes occurring in our country and in the world, but most of us are also dealing with changes in our personal world. Our bodies have been changing since the moment of conception. We experience changes in our relationships as people enter and leave our lives. We may experience changes in our health. The kinds of change occurring at any given moment are too numerous to list. We should be accustomed to change, because change is the only constant in life. Yet, change can be threatening and may trigger our worst fears. Change often represents both loss and gain. We lose something, but we gain something else.

Change can be stressful, but our thoughts about the changes determine the level of stress we experience. If we keep asking, "Why did this happen?" we stay stuck in the problem. If we can step back and attempt to see things from a higher perspective, we can begin to see that the change may have some benefits for us. Sometimes by closing one door, we open up new possibilities. Change can be an adventure that leads to new growth and wisdom. Good questions to ask ourselves are: What could be good about this change? How could I look at this situation, so I can feel comfortable about it? How would I need to look at this to feel better? An optimist views events in life as temporary, one-time and situational. A pessimist views events in life as permanent, pervasive and personal.

We can't keep change from happening. We can, however, become more stress hardy. Stress hardy people have the following attributes:

CONTROL: They are proactive. They believe they can make a difference, that they have some control. They don't get stuck in the "blame game."

COMMITMENT: They believe they are where they need to be, that all is in divine order. They make the most of situations. They stick to their decisions. They are committed to self and other important values.

CHALLENGE: People who are strong to stress see setbacks as problems that can be solved. Losses are challenges.

At this time of Crisis and Opportunity be gentle with yourself. Know that what you may be experiencing is normal. Pray and meditate as you search for meaning: ***This too shall pass!***

Quotable...

Twelve commandments for us...

1. Talk to yourself...there are times you need expert advice.
2. "In Style" are the clothes that still fit.
3. You don't need anger management...You need people to stop making you mad.
4. Your people skills are just fine...it's your tolerance for idiots that needs work.
5. The biggest lie you tell yourself is, "I don't need to write that down...I'll remember it."
6. "On time" is when you get there.
7. Even duct tape can't fix stupid...but it sure does muffle the sound.
8. It would be wonderful if we could put ourselves in the dryer for 10 minutes, then come out wrinkle-free and three sizes smaller.
9. Lately, you've noticed people your age are so much older than you.
10. Growing old should have taken longer.
11. Ageing has slowed you down, but it hasn't shut you up.
12. You still haven't learned to act your age and hope you never will.

(The above was emailed to me from MaryLou Wojtusik.)

Be willing to flow with the necessary change!