

De-stressing

IN NON-STRESSFUL WAYS

Before sharing my thoughts, I would like to share three very important facts with you:

1. Stress is a feeling that comes and goes. Unfortunately, as we live in a society where labels are so important, many people 'label' themselves as being 'stressed' ... it's amazing what a difference saying "I feel" ... rather than "I am" ... makes to your well-being.
2. Your cells eavesdrop on every conversation you have with others and with yourself. If you are constantly 'feeling stressed', then your cells will react accordingly, and your immune system will be compromised.
3. It is of the utmost importance to gain an awareness of your stressors. Often, people present to therapy with what they believe to be the root cause of their issue, whereas in actual fact it is something on a sub-conscious level unknown to them.

As an Oncology Psychotherapist (a therapist specialising in helping people cope with the emotional side-effect of cancer), every day I sit with people who are trying to alleviate their feelings of stress - as chronic levels of stress are known to affect certain tumour progressions and longevity. And every day I hear stories about how people believe that 'stress' has contributed to their diagnosis.

For this very reason, I would like to share some of my beliefs and thoughts around 'stress' - the little word that has such a big effect on the lives of many people, and to suggest ways in which to de-stress in non-stressful ways. After all, there is no use in attempting to de-stress in ways that only add to your existing feelings.

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SO NOW, HOW TO *De-stress* IN NON-STRESSFUL WAYS

- ~ Remember that in life there is not always a right way of thinking or a wrong way of thinking...but simply a different way. Believing that you are always right and trying to convince others of the same, can invoke a multitude of stressful feelings.
 - ~ Learn to respond to situations rather than to react. When we react to situations it is without thought and is often tense and aggressive. Whereas, a response is calm and non-threatening as it is guided more by logic and less by emotion.
 - ~ Journal – journaling is also a great way to de-stress, as it can help you identify the negative aspects of your life and your feelings around them. It also helps you see the positives aspects, and your feelings around them.
 - ~ Concern yourself with what you can control in life...don't worry about what you can't. Many people perceive that concern and worry are the same, however they are vastly different. To be concerned is to be calm, level-headed and relaxed about a situation.
 - ~ It can lead to positive actions. Whereas worrying about a situation involves loss of composure, and irrational thinking - assuming the worst even when there is no indication that the worst will happen
 - ~ Laugh, at least once a day, as it evokes pleasant thoughts.
 - ~ Learn to be gentle with yourself. Don't berate yourself when things don't go according to your plan. Rather than saying "I've failed" ... say "I tried my best".
 - ~ When life is overwhelming, and you're feeling uncomfortable, place yourself in a bubble where only pleasant thoughts dwell.
 - ~ Don't waste time, and energy, wondering about the 'what ifs' and 'maybes' ...the past cannot be changed, nor the future foretold. Learn to live in the present, and be present, right now.
 - ~ Learn to be 'healthy selfish' ...don't involve yourself in other people's problems. Not your circus...not your monkeys.
 - ~ Rid yourself of the labels that either you or someone else has placed on you. Labels come with huge expectations, and expectations play havoc with feelings of stress.
 - ~ Count your blessings. Before getting out of bed think of five things that you are grateful for.
- Stop being afraid of what can go wrong, start being excited about what can go right; and,
- ~ Always remember that nothing in life ever stays the same. If you're feeling stressed remind yourself that one day it will just be a memory.



I hope that having this knowledge, and implementing it, will help you to de-stress in non-stressful ways. For as we know, feeling stressed can have a profoundly negative effect not only on your psychological and emotional health, but also on your physical health.

I'm sure that most of you who are reading this article have heard the sayings 'Stress kills', or 'Stress is a killer'. Perhaps these should be changed to 'Feeling stressed kills', and 'Feeling stressed is a killer'. Either way, now is the time to take responsibility for your health and your longevity by practicing to de-stress in non-stressful ways.

x Barb