

TogetheriCan

6

November

HOLIDAY STRESS

The holidays are almost upon us. And, of course, *the stress* which accompanies all of the hustle and bustle surrounding the holidays is beginning.

Eustress (so-called good stress) or Dis-stress (so-called bad stress)—do they each affect the body the same way? Does the body see them as the same or does the body react and respond differently to each?

We oftentimes *look at our surroundings and blame them* for the worry, anxiety or stress they are producing in our lives.

Did I get a big enough turkey for Thanksgiving?

Are we able to fit everyone into our house over the holidays?

My budget is limited so I didn't buy the expensive presents for my spouse or children. I'm sure they're going to be upset.

My outside decorations for the holidays don't match my neighbors, what will everyone think?

We could go on and on and on about the "*what if's*", but it doesn't really do us any good.

Stress is really not about the stressors in our lives, it is about our thoughts and feelings, either in response or reaction to the stressors (triggers).

Said quite bluntly, *being stressed is a choice*. No one wants to hear that or accept it.

Anytime we are apprehensive, cautious, tentative, or untrusting, the tendency to *anticipate and react* is profound. Rarely do we stop to analyze the situation, consider our choices, and then *respond*.

Anticipation normally creates a physical reaction in the body. Most individuals will quicken the breath, waiting for the "*what if*" to happen. Many times they will end up holding their breath, waiting in anticipation of a terrible trauma, which rarely manifests.

Anticipation can sometimes be related to our past experiences and we're always waiting for the other shoe to drop, resulting in feelings of shame, guilt or remorse. Past traumas leave markers, beliefs in our subconscious mind—buried in the subconscious, never to be forgotten. Our conscious mind has long since pushed it out of its awareness. Triggers that we are sometimes totally unaware of can drive deep into the subconscious, reinvigorating those thoughts and feelings we experienced during the trauma. This in turn creates the cycle of stress.

To remove this kind of stress from our lives, we must evaluate the results of our lives and start to recognize the triggers. Once the triggers are identified, we can then choose to change the way we allow them to affect us.

We can *learn to respond* to those triggers, rather than reacting unconsciously to them.

Most anticipation is based on future events, none of which has happened yet. Our feelings somehow get tied to future events that probably are never going to happen. Those feelings concerned with future events are normally fear, worry or anxiety.

Studies show that 93% of what we worry about never comes about. Of the remaining 7%, 4% will happen, but there will be nothing we can do about it. That leaves 3% and who can guess or predict what that 3% is going to be?

If **most stress is created by the past or future** events, then the answer may be to start working in the **NOW**. What is going on in this exact present moment? Is there something that I can do to change the situation? If yes, then respond appropriately. If no, then acceptance is in order—accept what is and move on with your life.

There is a prayer, called the serenity prayer:

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change.
The courage to change the things I can.
And the wisdom to know the difference.”

Of course, if God, the Creator, is not part of your life, then that prayer is probably meaningless. You can forget it and find another way to handle your stress.

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