

Stress Bytes Newsletter

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"WHEN STRESS BITES, BITE BACK!"

THE NEWSLETTER OF ANNETTE VAILLANCOURT, PH.D.
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How to Become Extremely Neurotic and Stay That Way

M. Scott Peck, author of the book, *The Road Less Traveled*, made the clearest distinction that I've ever read between your garden variety neurotic and personality disordered people. Simply put, neurotics are those of us to make *ourselves* miserable. Personality disordered people make *others* miserable.

Fortunately or unfortunately, Freud said most of us are neurotic. That means we hold a set of unconscious beliefs about ourselves, other people, and the way the world works that do not correspond with reality. Psychologists tend to believe that these neurotic tendencies were learned in childhood; often in response to the emotional and behavioral environments present in your family.

Because our behaviors reflect our deepest held beliefs, we act as if what we believe is the Truth and doing so makes it so. Not to be deterred by reality, as adults neurotics act on their unconscious beliefs and assumptions in such a way as to

sometimes bring reality into alignment with them. If you believe people are eventually going to reject you, you will act in a way to unconsciously bring that about, by being cold, distant, overly needy, or rejecting in your own behavior, i.e. "best to reject them before they reject me." Without a recognition that your behavior is driven by these unconscious beliefs formed early in life, you are doomed to keep re-creating situations that reinforce or confirm those beliefs.

Neurotic beliefs tend to cluster into themes, such as those described by Jeffery Young's Schema Theory. These include an expectation that one's needs for security, safety, stability and nurturance, empathy, sharing of feelings, acceptance, and respect will not be met in a predictable manner. If you were raised in a family that was detached, cold, rejecting, withholding, lonely, explosive, unpredictable, or abusive, it's likely you would have fears of rejection and disconnection.

Or, maybe you were "spoiled" in a family characterized by permissiveness, overindulgence, lack of direction, or a sense of superiority -- rather than appropriate confrontation, discipline, goal setting and attainment, with appropriate limits in relation to taking responsibility and learning how to cooperate in a give and take manner. What you learn in such a family leads to difficulty respecting the rights of others, problems in working as part of a

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"It's normal to get depressed around the holidays, especially when we put too much pressure on ourselves."

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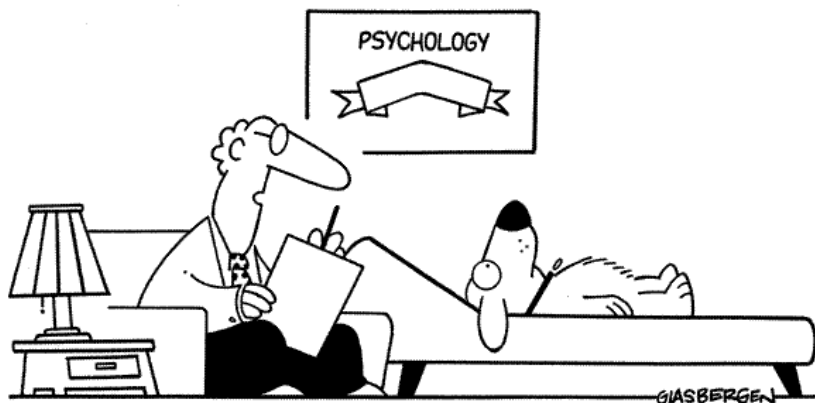
Neurotic..... —cont'd

team and making commitments or difficulty setting and meeting realistic personal and professional goals. In other words, you were not pushed enough to strive to achieve or you were not given adequate guidance, coaching, or encouragement to try something difficult and stick with it. Consequently you may feel entitled to preferable treatment without having earned it, lack self-discipline and self-control, and tend to shy away from things that make you uncomfortable or that seem too difficult. In this case, you would not only be miserable yourself, but probably make others who live and work with you miserable as well.

Maybe your neurotic tendency is toward being a people pleaser and putting everybody else's need ahead of your own. Then it's likely you grew up in a family where in order to gain love and approval, maintain one's sense of connection, or avoid retaliation there was excessive focus placed on the desires, feelings, and responses of others, at the expense of your own needs. Maybe you had an alcoholic or mentally ill family member. In such cases, you learn to go along to get along, not rock the boat, and put on a smile when you really want to scream in anger. Eventually you lose sight of your own needs or assume that your needs are unimportant or impossible to fulfill. Instead, you live to serve. In that case, you'll probably go into a helping profession, like nursing.

Finally, if your family was grim, demanding, overly critical, demanding of perfection, rule-bound, pessimistic and worried—in other words lacking in joy, spontaneity and fun – you might turn out to be that same kind of negative person that no one likes to be around, unless they have low self-esteem.

So if you recognize yourself in any of these scenarios, you can start becoming aware that the assumptions you made in childhood about yourself, other people and how the world works might not be functional for you as an adult. I had a bumper sticker on my last car that said, "Do not believe everything you think." This is good advice, especially for those of us who are neurotic and make ourselves miserable because we have not updated our internal "programming" since childhood.



"Your mother never read to you and your father never hugged you. That's why you drink from the toilet."

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE OUR **FREE** NEWSLETTER VIA EMAIL, PLEASE SEND AN EMAIL TO DRANNETTE@HUGHES.NET WITH THE WORDS "SUBSCRIBE TO STRESS BYTES" IN THE SUBJECT LINE OR COMPLETE THE SUBSCRIPTION FORM ON AT GOTSTRESSGETHELP.COM

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QUIZ: WHAT KIND OF NEUROTIC ARE YOU?**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Listed below are statements that a person might use to describe himself or herself. Please read each statement and decide how well it describes you. When there you are not sure, base your answer on what you emotionally feel, not on what you think to be true. Choose the highest rating from 1 to 6 that describes you and write the number in the space before the statement.

RATING SCALE:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 = Completely untrue of me | 2 = Mostly untrue of me |
| 3 = Slightly more true than untrue | 4 = Moderately true of me |
| 5 = Mostly true of me | 6 = Describes me perfectly |

_____ Most of the time, I haven't had someone to nurture me, share him/herself with me, or care deeply about everything that happens to me. ^{*ed}

_____ I find myself clinging to people I'm close to, because I'm afraid they'll leave me. ^{*ed}

_____ I need other people so much that I worry about losing them. ^{*ed}

_____ I'm fundamentally different from other people. ^{*si}

_____ I don't belong; I'm a loner. ^{*si}

_____ I feel alienated from other people. ^{*si}

_____ No one I desire would want to stay close to me if he/she knew the real me. ^{*ds}

_____ I feel that I'm not lovable. ^{*ds}

_____ I am too unacceptable in very basic ways to reveal myself to other people. ^{*ds}

_____ Most other people are more capable than I am in areas of work and achievement. ^{*fa}

_____ I'm not as talented as most people are at their work. ^{*fa}

_____ I'm not as intelligent as most people when it comes to work (or school). ^{*fa}

_____ I think of myself as a dependent person, when it comes to everyday functioning. ^{*di}

_____ I lack common sense. ^{*di}

_____ My judgment cannot be relied upon in everyday situations. ^{*di}

_____ I worry that I'll lose all my money and become destitute. ^{*vh}

_____ I can't seem to escape the feeling that something bad is about to happen. ^{*vh}

_____ I feel that a disaster (natural, criminal, financial, or medical) could strike at any moment. ^{*vh}

_____ I often feel as if my parent(s) are living through me--I don't have a life of my own. ^{*em}

_____ I often feel that I do not have a separate identity from my parent(s) or partner. ^{*em}

_____ My parent(s) and I tend to be overinvolved in each other's lives and problems. ^{*em}

_____ I feel that I have no choice but to give in to other people's wishes, or else they will retaliate or reject me in some way. ^{*sb}

_____ In relationships, I let the other person have the upper hand. ^{*sb}

_____ I've always let others make choices for me, so I really don't know what I want for myself. ^{*sb}

_____ I am a good person because I think of others more than of myself. ^{*ss}

_____ I'm so busy doing for the people that I care about, that I have little time for myself. ^{*ss}

_____ I've always been the one who listens to everyone else's problems. ^{*ss}

_____ I find it embarrassing to express my feelings to others. ^{*ei}

_____ I find it hard to be warm and spontaneous. ^{*ei}

_____ I control myself so much that people think I am unemotional. ^{*ei}

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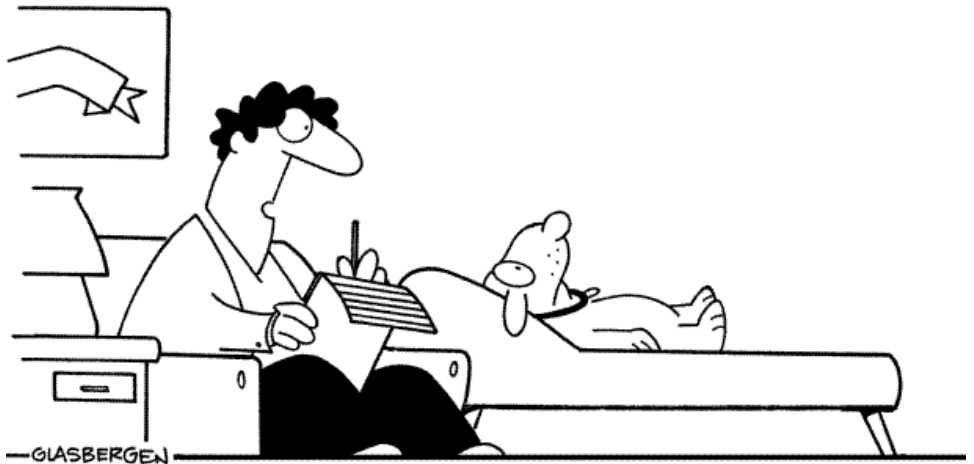
The Stress Doctor is IN!!!

A NEUROSIS IS A SECRET
 THAT YOU DON'T KNOW
 YOU ARE KEEPING.
 KENNETH TYNAN

NEUROSIS IS THE
 INABILITY TO TOLERATE
 AMBIGUITY.
 SIGMUND FREUD

NEUROTICS BUILD CASTLES
 IN THE AIR, PSYCHOTICS
 LIVE IN THEM. MY MOTHER
 CLEANS THEM.
 RITA RUDNER

A WOMAN HAS GOT TO BE
 ABLE TO SAY, AND NOT
 FEEL GUILTY, 'WHO AM I,
 AND WHAT DO I WANT OUT
 OF LIFE?' SHE MUSTN'T
 FEEL SELFISH AND
 NEUROTIC IF SHE WANTS
 GOALS OF HER OWN,
 OUTSIDE OF HUSBAND AND
 CHILDREN.
 BETTY FRIEDAN



"In one way or another, we're all confined by invisible fencing."

ANNETTE VAILLANCOURT, PH.D.
LICENSED CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

- Gently helping individuals, couples and groups resolve personal problems, manage stress, and reach their full potential since 1990.
- Specializing in Women's Issues and Stress Management
- Emotional Freedom Technique for Stress Reduction.

Call **(618) 549-5935** to set up an appointment

QUIZ: WHAT KIND OF NEUROTIC ARE YOU?...CONTINUED

- ___ I try to do my best; I can't settle for "good enough." ^{*us}
- ___ I must meet all my responsibilities. ^{*us}
- ___ I feel there is constant pressure for me to achieve and get things done. ^{*us}
- ___ I feel that I shouldn't have to follow the normal rules and conventions other people do. ^{*et}
- ___ I feel that what I have to offer is of greater value than the contributions of others. ^{*et}
- ___ I have a lot of trouble accepting "no" for an answer when I want something from other people. ^{*et}
- ___ I can't seem to discipline myself to complete routine or boring tasks. ^{*is}
- ___ If I can't reach a goal, I become easily frustrated and give up. ^{*is}
- ___ I have a very difficult time sacrificing immediate gratification to achieve a long-range goal. ^{*is}

Scoring: Total up your scores for each of the scales, represented by the superscript at the end of each statement. Your highest scores are your problem areas.

- Total for ___ ^{*ed} (emotional deprivation) ___ ^{*ds} (defectiveness/shame)
 ___ ^{*si} (social isolation) ___ ^{*fa} (failure) ___ ^{*di} (dependence/incompetence)
 ___ ^{*vh} (vulnerability to harm) ___ ^{*em} (enmeshment) ___ ^{*sb} (subjugation)
 ___ ^{*ss} (self-sacrifice) ___ ^{*ei} (emotional inhibition) ___ ^{*us} (unrelenting standards)
 ___ ^{*et} (entitlement) ___ ^{*is} (insufficient self-control)