

# Stress Bytes Newsletter

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 9

OCTOBER 2007

## "WHEN STRESS BITES, BITE BACK!"

THE NEWSLETTER OF ANNETTE VAILLANCOURT, PH.D.  
LICENSED CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR.

## How to Get What You Want

As a therapist, I am privy to the inner workings of the lives of many people. One of the things that amazes me is how many people are using outdated or incorrect assumptions about themselves and the world that disempower them, reduce their effectiveness, and sustain misery in their lives.

The theme I'd like to address today is not asking for what you want. To me, learning to ask directly and effectively for what you want is one of the joys and responsibilities of adulthood. As infants, it's more likely that our wants and needs were met without us having to ask, and were only limited by the resources and circumstances of the families and communities in which we were raised. If the limitations were severe, it's likely that after awhile you came to see the entire world as a place of limited resources. You might have concluded that either you were not entitled to what little was available to that there wasn't a lot to get. "Why ask, if you're not going to get it anyhow?" may have become your overriding

assumption and life script.

When people come for therapy, the first questions I ask are "what do you want?" or "what do you want out of life?" Sadly, these questions often stump people. They might muster up a desire to "be happy" or have "less stress." These vague responses suggest that part of their problem is that they haven't adequately addressed these very basic issues of taking full responsibility for their lives and acting as an agent on their own behalf. It could be that is because of an assumption that "this is just the way life is" or "this is just the way MY life is." Either way, I'm here to challenge that. By asking people to step outside of the box of their assumptions about themselves and what life has to offer, I've already started moving them towards a more empowered stance in life. When you can conceive of things being different or better, you're much more likely to ask for what you want and much more likely to get it than waiting and hoping that it will "just happen."

Let's look at some common barrier to asking for what you want. First, you don't ask for what you want because you don't know what you want, as discussed above. Sit down with a sheet of paper and start making a list of all the things you ever wanted or thought to want out of life. Don't censor or pause. Just start writing as fast as you can. Your list might include desires for love, money, family, career, travel, spiritual growth,

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**Annette Vaillancourt, Ph.D.**  
Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor  
231 W. Main, 2W  
Carbondale, IL 62901

Phone: 618-549-5935  
[www.GotStressGetHelp.com](http://www.GotStressGetHelp.com)  
E-mail: [DrAnnette@Hughes.net](mailto:DrAnnette@Hughes.net)

## How to Get What You Want—cont'd

friends, or leisure activities. Just let your imagination run wild. Post your list somewhere and review it regularly. Make a plan. Start asking for what you want. Start telling people of your wants and dreams.

Second, you might not ask for what you want because you automatically assume you won't get it or because you asked ONE TIME before and didn't get it. If you don't ever ask for what you want, you're guaranteed not to get it. Have you ever thought to yourself, "I shouldn't have to ask for what I want. If he/she loved me, they'd know." Phooey! This is an erroneous, outdated assumption that causes a lot of problems between spouses/partners. Not having to ask for what you want only works for infants. Even then, the wail and cry until someone figures it out. Don't make others guess. Use your words. Ask repeatedly. Try, try again.

Third, you may not ask for what you want because you assume that it either isn't available or possible. This is like living with blinders on. How do you know until you ask? Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, in their book about asking for what you want, *The Aladdin Factor*, say successful people "Ask, ask, ask!" Ask for what you want and keep asking until you find someone who can and will give you what you want.

Fourth, you may not ask for what you want because of low self-esteem. You may think that you are not worthy of good things or that other people's needs are more important than your own. You may think it's "selfish" to ask for what you want. Or you may fear that the reason you're not getting what you want out of life is because something deep and dark is wrong with you. To this, I say, get over yourself. You are just as deserving as anyone else on the planet no matter what has happened to you, what's going to happen to you, or how much other people need. You have needs too and it's natural and right to want to meet them. You won't be robbing anyone else. There's enough to go around.

Finally, to get what you want out of life you need to know how to and practice asking for it. You might limit your asking for fear of being seen as "needy." Or you might have been taught that it is "more blessed to give than to receive," so you are great at giving, but lousy at receiving. So, it's time to practice. Jack Canfield advises, ask for what you want in a way that assumes that you're going to get it. For example, when asking for a date, instead of asking, "You wouldn't want to go out with me to a movie on Saturday, would you?" try, "What time Saturday would you be available to go see a movie?" See the difference? The second way of asking assumes a "yes" and it's only a matter of negotiating the time. Practice writing out your requests in a positive way before asking.

In conclusion, my suggestions to those of you reading this article are to 1) figure out what you want, 2) assume what you want is available and possible (hint: if other people have or are doing what you want, it's possible) 3) practice asking for little things (like for change for a dollar from a clerk at Wal-Mart or for someone to help you rehearse how to ask for what you want), and 4) keep asking for what you want (find the right people to ask) until you get it. That's how I got this column in *Heartland Women's Newspaper*. I asked Chanda Green, the owner, if I could write one!



"Knock it off, Hon — I'm trying to read!"

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### THE TOP 25 THINGS I WANT IN MY LIFE

No time like the present to start your list. When you finish your list, post it somewhere you can read it every day.

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**Annette Vaillancourt, Ph.D.**  
**Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor**

Schwartz Building  
231 W. Main, 2W  
Carbondale, IL 62901

Phone: 618-549-5935  
E-mail: DrAnnette@hughes.net



***The Stress Doctor is IN!!!***

“EXPERIENCE IS WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU DON'T GET WHAT YOU WANT.”

DAN STANFORD

“IF YOU DON'T GET WHAT YOU WANT, YOU SUFFER; IF YOU GET WHAT YOU DON'T WANT, YOU SUFFER; EVEN WHEN YOU GET EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT, YOU STILL SUFFER BECAUSE YOU CAN'T HOLD ON TO IT FOREVER. YOUR MIND IS YOUR PREDICAMENT. IT WANTS TO BE FREE OF CHANGE. FREE OF PAIN, FREE OF THE OBLIGATIONS OF LIFE AND DEATH. BUT CHANGE IS A LAW, AND NO AMOUNT OF PRETENDING WILL ALTER THAT REALITY.”

DAN MILLMAN, WAY OF THE PEACEFUL WARRIOR



**“My husband gave me a hug for my birthday.  
He says 2 arms and 10 fingers count as 12 presents.”**

**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

**Book Recommendation: The Aladdin Factor**

**By Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen**

So often, the things that we want in our lives elude us for one very surprising (and deceptively simple) reason. We don't ask for them. From a higher salary ... to a better bargain ... to a little more help around the house, there are all sorts of desires that we harbor but never achieve, when the fact is, we haven't taken the most important step of all.

It may seem strange at first. But the act of directly asking for what something can be a tremendous challenge that stymies even the most successful people. According to Canfield and Hansen, the difficulty is rooted in a whole collection of psychological barriers, many of which have been with us since childhood. Fears ... pride ... limiting beliefs ... not realizing what is actually available to us ... or simply not knowing what it is we want in the first place.

These roadblocks are programmed into our subconscious and continually supported by a host of influences: schools, the media, even the people closest to us. They hold us back from clearly expressing our true desires to the world - and, consequently, prevent us from achieving the things we want.