

Stress Bytes Newsletter

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 6

JUNE 2006

"WHEN STRESS BITES, BITE BACK!"

THE NEWSLETTER OF ANNETTE VAILLANCOURT, PH.D.
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Mental Methods Of Managing Stress

Most people carry on a silent internal conversation with themselves during much of the day, yet are totally unaware of it. This internal self talk is very much like a self-fulfilling prophecy. You may be surprised at how much of what you feel is caused by what you tell yourself, what you think about any situation. It is most often your beliefs and thoughts about a situation that make a stressful, not the situation itself.

When your self-talk is positive, i.e., "I know I can do this" or "everything will go fine," you are more likely to succeed and proceed stress-free than not. When your self-talk is negative "I can't do this" or "I'm not smart enough"-- then you may not even try to succeed, thus fulfilling your inner prophecy. Other times our inner self-talk includes words that pressure us, such as "should," "must," "have to," "ought to," and the like. This kind of self talk creates guilt, tension, stress and discomfort. To reduce the stress of the "shoulda, coulda, ought

to's" I suggest replacing those words with, "I choose." So instead of saying, "I should go take a walk" changed to "I choose to go take a walk" it's a subtle but powerful difference in wording but it will change how you feel.

Here are some examples of negative self talk you need to turn around. The first is called catastrophizing. Catastrophizing is when you blow something out of proportion and make it a bigger problem than it actually is. An example might be if you have a headache, it doesn't stay a simple headache, it becomes a brain aneurysm.

The second type of negative self talk is overgeneralization. That means jumping to conclusions that are not really warranted. For example if you've had one thing go wrong today and you say, "I'm having a totally bad day," you have over-generalized because you have ignored every other positive thing that has happened in the day.

The third kind of self-talk is "black and white" thinking. This type of thinking maintains that something is either one way or the other and disregards that there is always a gray area in between.

Understanding and becoming aware of your unique self talk is the first step in learning to rewrite your internal script and reduce self created stress.

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"To reduce stress, we're appointing you the Designated Worrier for the entire office. Here's today's list."

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How do I rewrite my self-talk? First, learn to listen to your own self-talk. Write it down if necessary.

It might be helpful to make a chart with three columns and write down some examples of situations you would like to have happen such as, "I'd like that promotion," or "I want to ask that person out on the date." Then close your eyes and listen to how your self-talk responds to each desire.

Write your self-talk in the second column. Examples might be, "I'm not smart enough to get the promotion" or "that person wouldn't find me interesting anyhow". In the third column, write down a thought or two which is the opposite of column 2, if that statement is negative. For example, "I have earned that promotion" or "I'm a fascinating person, I just need a chance to show it."

Practiced using positive self talk every day. You will feel happier, more confident, and less stressed.

10 EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES FOR COPING WITH ANGER

- KEEP AN ANGER DIARY. LOOK FOR THEMES OR PATTERNS IN WHAT TRIGGERS YOUR ANGER.
- PRACTICE OTHER BEHAVIORS TO DO WHEN FEELING ANGRY.
- COUNT TO 10, TAKE A WALK, DO ANYTHING TO DELAY AN ANGRY RESPONSE.
- LEAVE THE ANGER PROVOKING SITUATION.
- TALK YOURSELF OUT OF FEELING ANGRY.
- EXAGGERATE YOUR FEELINGS TO A RIDICULOUS EXTREME, THEN LAUGH AT YOURSELF.
- LOOK FOR THE HUMOR IN THE SITUATION.
- LEARN HOW TO EXPRESS ANGER ASSERTIVELY.
- KNOW YOUR ANGER BUTTONS.
- KNOW YOUR BODY SIGNS THAT YOU'RE GETTING ANGER. DO SOMETHING TO RELAX.



"She was on vacation for three weeks, but burned up on re-entry."

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TIPS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE SELF TALK

These are some statements you can use to help yourself out in stressful situations. Repeat them out loud. Memorize them. Think of them as like having a kindly, comforting grandmother in your head.

- What is it that I have to do?
- I choose to do it.
- If I do the thing I fear, the fear is sure to disappear
- I know many ways to deal with this.
- I am well organized and efficient.
- I have succeeded in situations like this one before.
- I'm confident I can handle this
- It is time for a few deep breaths and some relaxation before I start.
- I'm comfortable, relaxed and at ease.
- I can meet this challenge. Coping is my middle name
- I will just do what I have to do.
- I'm in control.
- If I just pause a moment, and regroup I know I can handle it.
- It's okay for me to feel some fear. It motivates me to do my best.
- I'm always okay in the present moment.
- If I didn't get everything I wanted that's okay. I tried it and that's what counts.
- I have succeeded in some ways, and I'll have these successes to draw on next time
- That wasn't as hard as I thought. It'll be even easier next time.
- I'm making progress.
- One step at a time.
- Easy does it.
- Remember..... don't take this personally.
- Be here now
- I can do this!
- I lived through it.
- I'm doing better at this.
- I can learn from my mistakes.
- I don't need to illuminate the fear completely. I can just keep it manageable.
- Even though someone is angry, I did the right thing for myself.

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The Stress Doctor is IN!!!

“REALITY IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF STRESS AMONGST THOSE IN TOUCH WITH IT.”
JANE WAGNER

“IF YOU ARE DISTRESSED BY ANYTHING EXTERNAL, THE PAIN IS NOT DUE TO THE THING ITSELF, BUT TO YOUR ESTIMATE OF IT; AND THIS YOU HAVE THE POWER TO REVOKE AT ANY MOMENT.”
MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS

“STRESS IS AN IGNORANT STATE. IT BELIEVES THAT EVERYTHING IS AN EMERGENCY. NOTHING IS THAT IMPORTANT.”
NATALIE GOLDBERG

“DON’T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF. IT’S ALL SMALL STUFF.” - UNKNOWN



“I’ve developed a stress management program based on the Shut Up And Stop Whining Principle.”

ANNETTE VAILLANCOURT, PH.D.

LICENSED CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

- 16 years experience gently helping individuals, couples and groups resolve personal problems, manage stress, and reach their full potential.
- Specializing in Women’s Issues and Stress Management

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

Visit our website at www.GotStressGetHelp.com

ASSERTIVENESS AND STRESS

Learning to be assertive can reduce your stress. Assertive people are straightforward, matter of fact, and respectful of the thoughts and feelings of other people. Assertive people have high self-esteem. People with high self-esteem bounce back from stressful situations quicker.

Assertive people ask for what they want, say what they mean, and say “no” without guilt. Assertive people, if they get overwhelmed, do not stay that way for long. They know how to take action, set priorities, and ask for help.

Assertive people get things done on time. Assertive people do not procrastinate.

Assertive people speak up when things are going wrong. They do not blame or point fingers: they simply share their observations and feelings. Assertive people offer suggestions.

Assertive people stand up for their rights. They do not let others walk on them, use them, or manipulate them.

Can you see how learning to be assertive also helps reduce your stress?