

# Stress Bytes Newsletter

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## “WHEN STRESS BITES, BITE BACK!”

THE NEWSLETTER OF ANNETTE VAILLANCOURT, PH.D.  
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### Listen Away Her Stress in 3 Minutes

Do men and women differ in how they handle stress? New theories say, “Yes.”

You’ve probably heard of the “flight or fight” response to stress first made popular by Walter Cannon in 1929. Flight or fight assumes that the increase of stress hormones in the blood stream leads to one of two types of behaviors – either the actions to escape the stressor (flight) or a set of actions to deal with it directly (fight).

It “makes sense.” It’s become part of our cultural assumptions now because we’ve used and repeated it so long that it’s now considered “truth.” We’re a nation of “doers.” We don’t just sit there, we take action. We do something. It’s also a theory based on research done most exclusively on men.

Is there another perspective, equally as valid, that applies more to women’s behavior? There’s a new perspective coming from psychologists at the University of California about how women may respond to stress differently. This new theory talks more about women’s tendency to become protective, nurturing and seek affiliative behaviors when stressed. It’s called “tend and befriend.” In other words,

instead of taking action to confront or avoid stressors, women may prefer more self-protective, self-nurturing actions as their way of coping.

How many husbands and partners have had the experience of having the woman in their lives meet them after a hard day just wanting to talk about the day’s stressors, problems and events? How many have seen that look of dismay after offering up a well-thought out “solution” to their loved one’s problems? “Leave or deal with it, honey,” is often the well meaning advice, but probably not the response the woman appreciates hearing. This is why many women love their girlfriends’ company...because they get those “tend and befriend” needs met.

If “tend and befriend” is what a woman are seeking when stressed, then what she needs is a connection, someone to listen to her feelings and thoughts until she has released her pent up stress. In other words, she wants you to be a friend and nurture her through validation and empathy, not by giving her advice or getting impatient with her “venting.” Having someone listen to you well is like slipping into a hot bubble bath....maybe even better!

Only after her stress is sufficiently relieved by your attentive listening and empathic responses might she be ready to problem-solve or think of alternative plans of action to address the problem. Perhaps just venting her feelings and thoughts was all she wanted and needed.

So when a woman is stressed, try listening to her or suggest she meet a few of her girlfriends for a cup of tea and a nice long talk. Women feel seen, heard, .

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**“My husband and I are getting along much better now. We’re outsourcing our arguments to a couple overseas.”**

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## Listen.... Cont'd from page 1

validated and cared about when someone really listens. I have a delightful friend who when leaving his office one day, declared, "I'm going home to give my wife a good LISTENING to!"

So what can you do to help the women in your life relieve their stress? Listen. Active listening involves giving someone your undivided attention by reducing or eliminating distractions - like putting the kids to bed, and turning off the TV and phones. Being close by and looking at the other person who is talking is a signal of attention. Nodding while listening and paraphrasing what she said demonstrates understanding. Allowing silence or inviting the speaker to go deeper into her thoughts or feelings is more effective than asking a series of questions. A simple "go on" or "tell me more" invites her to complete her thoughts, release her feelings and feel more relaxed.

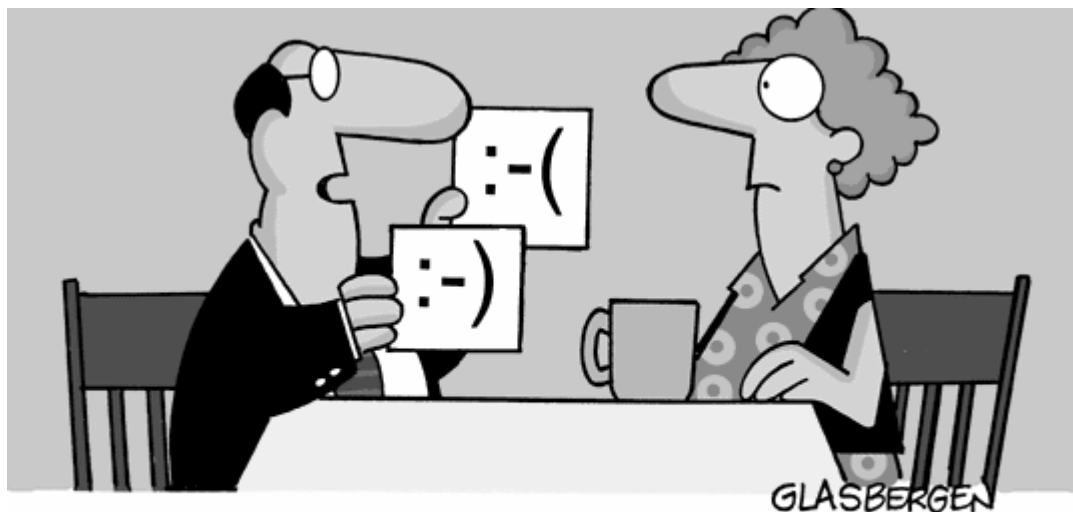
Finally, it's amazing how little time good listening takes and how much time and how emotionally draining (or damaging) bad listening can be. You've probably all heard of or had those "discussions" that go on for hours and nothing gets resolved. In fact, more stress can be created. To me that suggests that active listening is not taking place. Active listening can often clear up an issue, or at least get it all out on the table in less than 3 minutes!

When I give presentations and teach active listening skills, I assign someone to talk for 3 minutes about a particular issue or concern they wish to share. I consistently hear that 3 minutes seems like "forever" and that people "run out of things to say" within that time. Compare this to the "fight" that goes on for hours when both of on the defensive and no one is listening. Which would you rather have?

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**"You always complain that I don't know how to show my emotions, so I made these signs."**

## AFFIRMATIONS

INSTRUCTIONS: Read aloud to yourself with ENTHUSIASM at least twice daily. Affirmations are like telling the truth in advance.

To SUPERCHARGE your affirmations, try coupling them with EFT. See attached for tapping points.

### FEARLESSNESS

- I act as if I were fearless.
- The more I let myself feel my feelings, the more I expand my capacity to feel.
- I released my fears and the energy bound up within them.
- I am over the fear that I never have enough.
- I have enough; I have abundance.
- I trust that darkness always precede an expansion of consciousness.
- I overcome the urge to retreat on the brink of discovery.
- Choices and perceptions in my life are flexible, not rigid or absolute.
- I suggest now to my soul, over and over, that I am freeing myself from fear.
- I feel compassion toward myself for all the years I have been afraid.
- I no longer listen to those who want to import their fears and to me.
- I take risks and always act with responsibility and grace.
- I let go the fear of being different.
- I let go of the need to meet others' expectations.
- I cease being intimidated by others anger.
- I let go of my fear of what may happen if people do not like me.
- I let go of having to do it his or her way.
- I dare to show my hand, to show my inclinations, to show my enthusiasms.
- I dare to live the life that truly reflects my deepest needs and wishes.
- I give up the need to correct people's impression of me.

### PEACE AND CONTENTMENT

- I say yes unconditionally to the givens of human life.
- I live in serene equanimity through storm and calm.
- I can feel myself growing in spiritual consciousness.
- I can feel a divine energy within me that is behind whatever love, wisdom, or healing power I have.
- I say yes to what is.

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

“THE OPPOSITE OF TALKING ISN'T LISTENING. THE OPPOSITE OF TALKING IS WAITING.”

FRAN LEBOWITZ

“LISTENING, NOT IMITATION, MAY BE THE SINCEREST FORM OF FLATTERY.”

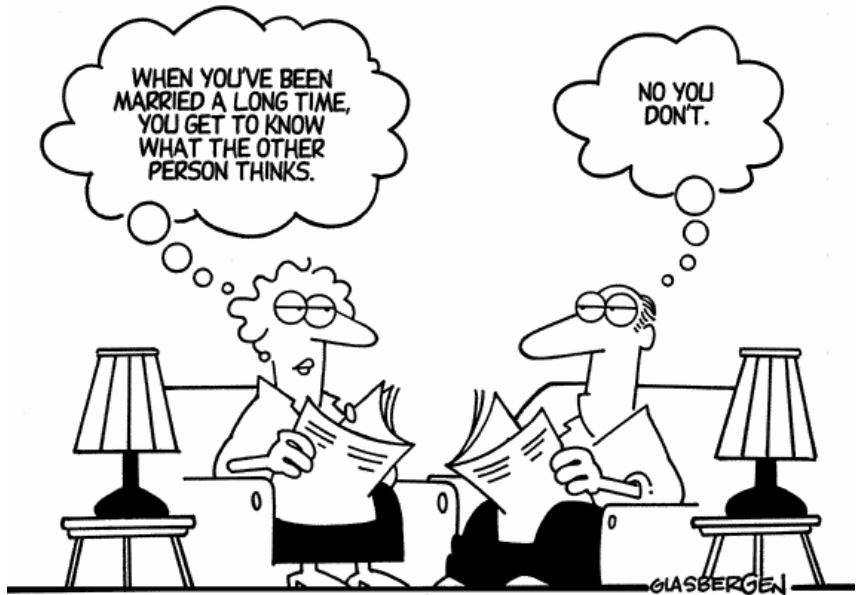
DR. JOYCE BROTHERS

“THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO, INSTEAD OF LISTENING TO WHAT IS BEING SAID TO THEM, ARE ALREADY LISTENING TO WHAT THEY ARE GOING TO SAY THEMSELVES.”

ALBERT GUINON

“WITH THE GIFT OF LISTENING COMES THE GIFT OF HEALING.”

CATHERINE DE HUECK



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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](http://www.GotStressGetHelp.com)

## 5 ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

Steps towards Active Listening that demonstrates caring for the other person are:

**Attending**—making eye contact, turning towards the person, being in close proximity

**Acknowledgement**—verbally letting the other person know you've heard them, i.e., "I see," "Uh hum," "Oh my!"

**Inviting**—encouraging the speaker to go on, go deeper, say more

**Summarizing or Paraphrasing**—it's never rude to interrupt to demonstrate that you understood what the other has said by paraphrasing. If you've done a good job, they will say, "EXACTLY!" and look really grateful

**Asking Questions**—to be used for clarification of information only. Otherwise, use **Inviting**. Please don't ask "Why?" That tends to put the speaker on the defensive.