

CHAPTER 6 STRESS

YOU MUST DISCOVER WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR INSIDE NOT OUTSIDE OF YOURSELF

We all have an inner peace we can learn to consciously access.

External rational thought creates external feelings.

Internal conscious thought accesses internal feelings.

SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE INVENTORY

(1) Too much pressure causes stress. True or False?

(2) We need to learn how to control stress with more management classes. True or False?

(3) Stress is caused by too much to do with too little time in which to do it. True or False?

(4) Stress is a figment of our imagination. True or False?

(5) People must feel stressed out every time they are under heavy pressure. True or False?

STRESS; NUMBER ONE KILLER OR A FIGMENT OF OUR IMAGINATION?

The peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus. Phil 4:7.

"I have learned in whatever state, I can be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Phil. 4:11-13

As long as people think the external conditions create their feelings, they will always be under the control of the circumstances. When they realize thought creates feelings, they begin to take control of their lives.

Looking outside of ourselves for what we want leads to dysfunctional behavior. When we look outside ourselves, we believe the event creates the feeling. When things go as expected we feel secure. When things do not go as expected, we feel insecure. We can let the event determine the meaning of our life and become a victim to the circumstances. If we perform well, we will feel well. If we perform poorly, we feel guilty. We become powerless over their poor performance.

If others react in a positive manner, we feel positive. If others act in a negative way, we feel hurt and angry. We become controlled by the actions of others. When we are in a high mood, we feel up. When we are in a low mood, we feel down. Our mood determines

our reaction.

TURN YOUR PROBLEMS INTO SAMPLES

Some people never learn how to deal with stress because they try to avoid stressful situations. I have been in a dog training class. Because my dog is very friendly and thinks all dogs love her, she would get out of control when she saw other dogs. In the past I would get upset if other dogs were around. The trainer pointed out, however, that the best time to teach her was when there was an outside disturbance.

Trying to learn these principles when there is no disturbance is fairly ineffective. That is why I tell people who are contemplating a divorce (unless it is an abusive situation) to stay in the marriage and practice being in the grace. It is the only place they can practice being in the Grace. Once they get out of the marriage, where will they practice it? Well, in the next marriage.

Why not learn to be in the grace in the current marriage and save oneself a lot of woe. It might even straighten the marriage out. I know a priest who counseled a woman in a difficult marriage. Her husband was an alcoholic and was dying of cancer. His advice to her was to go home and love the man. She decided to do it and in two months he had given up alcohol, his cancer was in remission, and the marriage had become healed.

Stress has been identified as the number one killer in this country. It is the cause of much of the death due to heart failure. It impacts auto-immune diseases such as cancer, AIDS, and multiple sclerosis. It is the chief cause of mental and emotional illness. It is the cause of much of our drug, chemical, food and alcohol abuse.

It has been said that it is the cause of burn out, loss of jobs, absenteeism, marriage break ups, child abuse, and depression. There are Stress Control classes, drugs, and pills (from aspirin to the really big stuff). Actors, athletes, and public officials have blamed stress for their addictions.

With all of the material out there on how to control stress, on all the terrible things associated with it, and all the money spent to overcome it, why haven't we made more progress with its control?

The reason is, we are treating the symptom and not the cause. It is a fact thought creates stress, not the events that were listed above. Attempting to control events is impossible. But when we switch to controlling our thoughts, we will be on the way of true stress prevention.

NATURE OR NURTURE

Recent studies of DNA have seemed to point out that nature is more important than nurture. The structure of our genes seems to determine our physical and emotional make up.

The fact that some people tend to be more stressed than others, while others handle

difficult situations with less stress has been attributed to their DNA make up. Yet this is not exactly true. A person's DNA does not cause stress. Under certain circumstances DNA releases certain proteins which the brain reacts to. But it's the brain's reaction to an event that triggers the release of the protein, not the event.

In other words, thought creates the feeling which triggers the protein. When a person is able to access the inner peace, however, they are then able to control the brain's release of the protein.

Getting rid of stress is not a matter of slowing down on the outside, but of slowing down on the inside. It is a fact that when people start slowing down on the inside, they tend to speed up on the outside. That is, they are able to get more done with less mistakes. You can see from this stress is an attitude, not an event. Trying to control stress on the outside is serious business.

When people find themselves in stressful situations they say "Get serious" about your job, your marriage, your personal life. But what does this mean? Does it mean if you get serious, you will be able to do more than if you are not serious? I think not. There is absolutely nothing you can do by getting serious you cannot do by staying in the peace. And you'll find it's a lot more fun to do something with joy than to do it with seriousness.

We need to start to lighten up. It's OK to enjoy life, smell the flowers. You will get more done when you are joyful than when you are being driven, rushing around, and trying to control things so you can finally feel at peace.

Some people are trying to slow down and get off the fast track. Some people in their wisdom should do that. In the life we live today, parts of it will always be too busy. But our lives do not have to be hectic. It is a truth you can stay in the fast lane and enjoy yourself without stress.

As long as people think events create their stress, they will feel stress. That is truth. When people are in small groups, they have the opportunity to ask the questions and find the answers by reflecting or becoming conscious of the truth it is thought that creates feeling, not events. One of the truths they are able to reflect upon is that sometimes they feel more stress than at other times. This truth must be discovered by reflection, not analysis.

The second truth is the mood they are in does make a difference when they think about their circumstances. They do not, in fact, always have to feel stress every time they think of their circumstances. They reflect on the truth that is possible to be at Peace when they think of their circumstances. When people take to heart the truth of this possibility, they are just on the edge of experiencing that peace they are looking for.

The fact is, stress itself does not exist. It is basically impossible just to feel stress. Think about feeling stress without identifying it with anything else. If we don't think about our circumstances or events or people or what we have to do, we can't feel stress.

Stress is caused by the way we are thinking, not by the event. Our society tends to reinforce our irrationality, that we identify stress with circumstances rather than with thought. If you think stress comes from external events, then you become a victim -- powerless, out of control and reactive to events. When you can make the truth real, that thought creates the feeling of stress, then you have the choice to become in control, powerful, a victor, and proactive.

LEARNING TO MOVE FROM THE MECHANICS TO THE DYNAMICS

Stress is caused by centering on the externals in order to determine the internals. That is, "mechanics" determine the "dynamics". It is important to know the difference between the mechanics and the dynamics. You don't use mechanical exercises to get in the peace. You should use exercises to get the understanding of the dynamics of how to get into the peace.

First, some people get in the peace with music, meditation, chanting, reading, singing, and so forth. But if they do not understand the dynamics, they will be stuck with the mechanics. They can't get the peace unless they go to the mountains or the sea or where ever.

Secondly, they miss the harmony of taking the peace with them rather than having to go back to the old mechanics. They are looking for a quick fix in the mechanics rather than a jump-start from understanding the dynamics.

I knew a person who could get in the peace by thinking about fishing. He was sure he could get in the peace anytime by going fishing in his head. The problem was, after a short time he lost the feeling. No matter how much he thought about fishing, it was gone. He was now willing to spend some time learning the dynamics.

The reader can try this exercise to understand the dynamics. Think of some favorite pleasant memory. It could be Christmas, with its songs, smells, and crowds. For others it could be a fantasy island with cool breezes, warm blue water, and tall palm trees. Whatever the thought, let it create the appropriate feeling of peace, joy, love. Now stay with the feeling and drop the thought. As you stay with the feeling and drop the thought, you will shift from the external rational mind (which created the external feeling) to the internal conscious emotional mind (which now accesses the pure inner feeling). The thought that once created the feeling is gone. Your inner mind now kicks in. Now learn to ride the feeling, as a surfer rides a wave. See how long you can stay with it in harmony with your rational mind. You are now learning to move from the mechanics to the dynamics.

GET A HOLD OF YOURSELF

Feeling stressed out, insecure, unhappy and unloved results in a low mood and a sense of low self esteem. . In order to come out of a low mood we look for mechanics. What we need to understand are the dynamics. It lies in understanding how the power a change of heart, or the way we are thinking can impact us and then we need to do it.

Here is an exercise that might be helpful to you right now no matter how you are feeling.

Think of some situation that is causing you grief, trouble fear, anger . anxiety or stress.

GET A HOLD OF YOUR SELF NOW. Drape your arms around your body and start hugging. Sense how it feels to hold on to yourself.

LET YOUR SELF BE HELD. After a time start to sense how it feels for you to be held by yourself. When you do this it will create a change of heart. Like changing from trying to be understood to understanding. You are now using your conscious faculty. Your body should get more relaxed and at peace.

KEEP YOUR SELF TOGETHER. Gradually let your arms down and continue to be conscious of being held. Focus on this sense of wholeness that comes from within. See how long you can continue in the presence as you move about in your new life.

Now check your answers and see if you have any change of heart.

RESPONSES TO SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE SURVEY

(1) Too much pressure causes stress.

FALSE- Our perspective or thought creates the feeling of stress.

(2) We need to learn how to control stress with more management classes.

FALSE -We need to learn how to change our way of thinking.

(3) Stress is caused by too much to do with too little time in which to do it.

FALSE- Stress is caused by stressful thoughts, not events.

(4) Stress is a figment of our imagination.

TRUE-What else? It only exists in our minds.

(5) People must feel stressed out every time they are under heavy pressure.

FALSE- Only if they think so.