

REVISED AND UPDATED

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO

Stress Management



Principles and Practice

Roland Trujillo



A Brief Introduction to Stress Management



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CONTENTS

Preface.....	7
Introduction	8
A Primer on Stress & Its Solution.....	12
Over-Reacting is a Way of Life for Most People ..	18
The Intimidation-Stress Connection	23
The Solution.....	30
Reminders to Help Yourself Remain Centered....	37
Understanding Resentment and its Traumas	42
The Power of Awareness is also the Power to Love	46
The Metaphysics of Spiritual Recovery	54

Preface

In this small but foundational work, I have condensed over 20 years of research on stress into a few pages, making clear the nature of the problem for the reader to readily grasp.

By understanding the nature of the stress and its cause, the method of resolution becomes apparent.

More importantly, I introduce the psycho-spiritual principles that modulate the emotions and protect the mind, so as to permit recovery from emotional trauma and the maintenance of well being.

It is my sincere hope that the reader will take the important next step, which is to obtain and practice the meditation exercise referred to in this manuscript. It may be downloaded free at:

www.commonseccounseling.org

Introduction

Most of us would like to deal with life's problems with calmness and understanding. Instead we find ourselves reacting and becoming upset. The more upset we are, the more resentful we become toward others.

We become impatient with them and then we become impatient with ourselves. We usually end up blaming others for upsetting us, though the real cause is our lack of self control.

Of course, this is unfair to others. So they react to us. Soon family and relationship problems escalate. Once the process begins, we don't know how to stop it.

Either we explode at one another or we repress our hostilities until we are seething volcanoes. All this repressed material soon erupts in other symptoms.

When we can't control ourselves, then we look to experts to control us. Soon we are their subjects, paying dearly for their treatments which never really seem to make us better. Individuals, families, and the whole world are brimming over in anger and upset.

Fortunately there is a real answer to our problem. It focuses on the moment of reaction when we succumb to some stress.

Look at it another way. If you could learn to be calm in the moment of stress (without expressing or repressing impatience, anger or upset), you would not become upset in the first place. Nor would you add any fuel to the fire, escalating both internal stress and negative relational outcomes. Calmness and reason could be brought to bear, and you might even be amused rather than disturbed by the little things that used to upset you.

When the small incidents are handled with poise, they do not accumulate and escalate to become the overwhelming issues we feel we can't cope with.

In order to solve your problem, you must learn to have an attitude of alert preparedness. When the moment of stress arrives, you will thereby be ready for it, already graced with calmness and understanding. Now, you will have a twinkle in your eye as you meet the moment with understanding. You will now influence the moment instead of the moment influencing you.

The way to be prepared to meet life with understanding is through finding the state of consciousness you had just before you fell.

The author believes that the day begun with proper meditation assists the sincere person in finding this state of awareness, which can then be carried out into the world to deal calmly with what the day may bring.

While the focus of the first section of this treatise is on describing the nature of the stress problem, the author has already introduced the meditation and its possible benefits so that the reader can, at every point, compare and contrast the more elegant and sophisticated way of facing life with the emotional trauma inducing patterns of reacting that many, if not most, people fall into.

This meditation also teaches the practitioner how to become still, separating the consciousness from its involvement in thought and emotions, which is also important in dealing successfully with negative memories and ideas due to past failings.

The consciousness is stabilized by centering in objectivity and is able to observe rather than react to worries, fears, and fantasy.

The meditation also prevents emotions from rushing to the head and overwhelming the consciousness.

Without the energy and reinforcement of these emotions, negative notions lose their power to compel reaction.

Calmed down and centered, the person is able to bring intuitive guidance to bear on the situation he or she is facing.

This positive state of consciousness and well being is implemented by the proper meditation practice. By beginning the day with a few minutes of meditation (and refreshing it two or three times during the day), the meditator downloads (to use a computer analogy) enough calmness and understanding to meet the day's vicissitudes.

What most of us do, on the other hand, is go out into the world and react to something. The rest of the day is spent playing catch up. Plus, there is left over baggage from previous upsets which carries over into the next interaction.

Already upset and with adrenaline flowing, the reactive person feels anxious and impatient. When someone (such as a partner, child, or coworker) comes along with some issue, there is the usual impatience and over-reaction which, of course, upset the other person.

This leads to misunderstanding and a bigger problem.

It is much better to allow reason and patience to lead the way. When you begin the day with a commitment to knowing and flowing from what you wordlessly know in your heart in each moment, you become less subjective, less suggestible, and less prone to upset.

All that remains is to learn this marvelously simple ancient technique, coupled with a sincere desire to know the Truth which is greater than you are, and a willingness to admit your wrong.

Without the meditative technology to learn how to become objective to emotions and thoughts, the person remains subject to both intrapsychic and external press, and will continue to struggle with what he or she should be observing. Without the sincere attitude, the person remains defensive and both emotions and actions remain self protective or aggressive.

The mind set facilitated by the proper meditation may be the same “humility” often spoken of as an important aid to emotional management and a sense of well being by psychologists and faith based counselors.

- 1 -

A Primer on Stress & Its Solution

Basically anything we react to is a stressor and causes us to experience stress. Dr. Hans Selye, the father of stress research, said there are two types of stress: so called “eu-stress,” or pleasant stress, and “dis-stress” or unpleasant stress.

We are all familiar with unpleasant stress and the toll it can take on our body. If you eat something tainted, it stresses your body to react. Cold, wind, rain, or excessive heat stress the body and elicit a response.

Spraining your ankle or falling off your bike is a stress that elicits response. Being mugged, robbed, or mauled by a dog cause us to react and undergo stress.

We also know that such events as divorce, losing a job, and being betrayed by another are unpleasant stresses.

These negative or unpleasant stresses cause a whole variety of bodily responses and changes, both specific (like swelling at the site of injury) and nonspecific

(affecting the whole body). These changes require energy and ultimately take their toll on the body. Stress is cumulative, in that it gradually uses up our life force.

Yes, some stresses are part of life (like a rain shower, a hot day, or a brisk windy day). They can't really be totally avoided (except the excessive ones). They are invigorating and without them we might become bored or stagnate.

Dr. Selye discovered that so-called eu-stresses such as going to a party, attending an exciting ball game, or starting new job are stresses too.

These stresses may be pleasant, but they also take their toll on the body just as much as obvious unpleasant stresses do.

Dr. Selye is not saying that we should avoid new or fun situations. They are part of life and have their place. Look carefully and you will see that the person who avoids life does so because of resentment and fear: so even in hiding and avoiding, they are reacting negatively and stressing.

What Dr. Selye is saying is that we should be aware that any stress ultimately wears us down. Too much stress, either dis-tress (like a divorce or being fired) or eu-stress (moving to a new house) will use up some of your stock of irreplaceable life force.

More stress wears you down quicker than less stress. Stress is cumulative.

Stress takes its toll. It may be invigorating, but it also drains us of life force. And our over-reactions (to whatever is, by definition, the stressor) lead to all manner of symptoms.

The bottom line is this: we must find a way to take things in stride, both good and bad.

In other words, over-reactions are not good. The author directs the reader to bear in mind that a reaction at one extreme can become its opposite. Because the

body tends to go to extremes in its quest for homeostasis, an over-reaction often results in the other extreme of suppression or inhibition. Similarly, long term stress on a cell, system, or organ can result in shut down.

The reader is also asked to bear in mind that the same phenomenon occurs with emotions. For example, excessive emotion can lead to withdrawal, or to a low after an excessive high. Fear of what anger can do often leads to suppression and inhibition. Please note that while the result in some individuals is suppression and inhibition, this does not obviate the fact that the dysfunctional stress syndrome began with the over-reaction.

Look at all the over-reactions which are at the physical level—such as asthma, allergies, rheumatoid arthritis, and auto immune disease—where the body's extreme responses are more harmful than what the stressor is doing. In other words, pollen cannot really hurt you, but an over-reaction can. Anaphylactic shock is a big over-reaction that can even kill a person.

But how about all of our emotional over-reactions: anger, rage, irritation, hostility, hyper excitement on the one hand and hurt feelings, disappointment and frustration on the other? These emotions are reactions that are stressing us (and ultimately killing us if we don't learn to be less emotional).

Psychoneuroimmunology is the field which studies the relationship between the brain, nervous and immune system. Researchers have found that the brain and immune system represent a single, integrated system of defense. In other words, our emotions affect our immune system. Researchers are also finding that negative emotions—such as anger, hurt feelings or fear—can suppress and dysregulate the immune system.

Simply put--both our mental and physical well being are contingent on emotional control.

Many people love to over-react and yell and scream at ball games. Other people take advantage of negative outcomes to play the "poor me, what have I ever done to deserve this" game. Both types of individuals are actually adding stress to their lives through these feelings.

People argue and quarrel all the time because they react angrily. Others react angrily and suppress it, but their reaction is still stressing their body.

Many people get irritated at others. They feel they have a right to judge others and complain. But their daily bouts of irritation take a toll on the body.

Some people habitually stay up late to party or study, depriving themselves of sleep. They are unnecessarily subjecting their body to stress. No wonder they feel tired and hung over the morning after the night before.

No wonder people come back from a vacation more drained than before they left. We may get away with such practices for awhile, especially when we are young, but sooner or later we pay the price for long term stress.

Just as partying and then cramming for a test are unnecessary stresses which we inflict on ourselves, so are our angers, secret hostilities, and impatient frustrations.

Take work for instance. Of course we have to work. But we should be able to work without becoming angry and upset at our work.

Though life will throw things our way, we should be able to go through life without reacting to everything.

What I am saying is that some stress is unavoidable, but too much stress is not good for us. Most of us heap an extra layer of stress on ourselves through our emotional over-reactions.

We must find the patience and faith to live life more calmly and less emotionally.

I believe there is a way of living where we can go through life without reacting emotionally and being stressed at all (as we have described it). It simply is not necessary to get angry over life's little set backs, nor is it necessary to get all worked up to accomplish something.

There is a way of living and moving and having our being where we go through life without life going through us. But this higher spiritual way of living is only available to the person who first learns the basic lessons of humility, patience, forgiveness and laying down the emotional ego life.

Many of us are experiencing huge amounts of stress unnecessarily because we are indulging emotions all the time, especially anger, hostility and resentment.

Work is one thing; working angrily is another. Encountering a traffic jam is one thing; becoming upset at it is another.

Here is the key to eliminating undue stress from your life. Let go of resentment.

Go back and take a look at the examples given of situations where most people react to with negative emotions.

You will notice that underneath the anger, rage, irritation, hostility, frustration, and dejection can be found resentment. In other words, resentment is the common denominator for many of our negative emotions.

Another thing: when we get upset, angry and frustrated, we also experience negative, hostile, and destructive thinking. Resentment is what initiates and sustains the negative thoughts.

There is a vicious cycle involved. The negative thoughts then spin more negative emotions, and so on.

Resentment is the “little” reaction that begins the cascade of negative thinking and unnecessary stress reactions that lead to misery and suffering. You must learn to watch for it and let it go.

The author does not intend this to be a comprehensive treatment of the subject, but wishes to make the reader aware of the role of resentment in exacerbating emotional issues.

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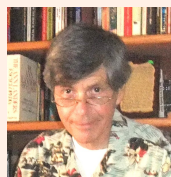
Principles and Practice

We have all suffered the consequences of excessive stress. We know how stressful moving, losing a job, or dealing with a major illness can be. But could it be that we are adding to our stress load by over-reacting emotionally? Could it also be that we are making our body undergo stressful reactions by our attitude and mindset toward people and circumstances around us?

In this concise but profound treatise, Roland Trujillo informs the reader about the basics of stress. Grasping the basics of stress, the reader is now prepared to understand the psycho-spiritual principles that permit a person to face stressors more calmly. This could be one of the most important treatments of this issue you will ever read.

Roland Trujillo is Director of the Center for Common Sense Counseling. He has written eighteen books and authored hundreds of articles and postings on stress reduction, emotional control, and principles of

harmonious living. His California-based radio program has brought thought provoking ideas and practical advice to his listeners for 25 years. Roland continues to research and lecture on positive empowered living.



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