Conquering Stress and Its Symptoms

The Problem and the Solution

Roland Trujillo
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Preface

This is one of the most important manuscripts I have ever written. In this small but foundational work, I have condensed 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 proper meditation exercise. It may be downloaded free at www.commonsensecounseling.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 become, 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 add any fuel to the fire. 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 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 this treatise is on describing the nature of the stress problem, the author has introduced the meditation at this point 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 way many 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 intuition 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 once or twice 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 (like a spouse or child) comes along with some issue, there is the usual impatience and overreaction, 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 "upsetable".

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.
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 take 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 would stagnate.

But 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. And 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 can go to 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, the high becomes the low, or fear of what anger can do often leads to 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: asthma, allergies 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 metal and physical well being are contingent on emotional control.

Many people love to over-react and yell and scream at ball games. Or they love to moan and groan and play
the “poor me, what have I ever done to deserve this” game. They 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, and they secretly enjoy having something to complain about. 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 party, study too much and stay up late, depriving themselves of sleep. They are unnecessarily subjecting their body to stress. No wonder they feel drained 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 it 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.

Another example: 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. And most of us heap an extra layer of stress on ourselves through our emotional 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 we 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.
We have outlined the physical aspects of stress and introduced the reader to how emotions add another layer of reaction and complicate our physical responses.

In other words, we have seen that emotions increase stress reactions. Bear in mind that an inhibitory response is also a response (another act the body is compelled to perform).

In this chapter, let us direct our attention to the genesis of the emotional overlay contributing to stress, namely our ego attitude and the ego’s use of emotions to support the compensation of pride.

These emotions are called into service primarily in defense of the ego’s faithlessness, lovelessness, and stubbornness. These characteristics present themselves as impatience, resentment, and willfulness. Let us examine in more detail the interconnectedness of our attitude, emotions and stress.
To recapitulate, people actually complicate, increase, and sustain stress reactions because of emotional overlay.

There is story that illustrates the above concept. A man was driving on a country road and got a flat tire.

He did not have a jack (which he needed to put on the spare tire), so he began to walk to find the nearest farmhouse so he could borrow a jack there.

As he was walking, he thought: “I hope there is a farm house around here.” He walked some more and then thought: “What if there is a house but no one is home?” He walked a few more minutes and thought: “if someone is home, what if they don’t have a jack?” He kept walking and then thought: “What if they have a jack but won’t lend it to me?” The man kept walking and getting more and more upset. Finally, he saw a farm house. He walked up to the front door and knocked.

When the farmer came to the door, the man shook his fist at him and said: “you can take your lousy jack and go to hell!”

This story illustrates how we stress ourselves and work ourselves into an emotional state through negative thinking. But what throws us into the negative thinking? It is resentment that wipes out patience and faith.

There is no reason why a slow grocery store line has to irritate, let alone make us angry. Yet many people do get irritated or angry at someone in line who is slow.

Why? Because our impatience feeds judgment. We can get a little high by judging the one who is delaying us. We can feel the resentment, which leads to more impatience, more judgment and hostility. The suppressed hostility leads to dis-ease and perhaps a headache or tummy ache. Then we can revel in blaming
the person for our discomfort, and resent the person even more.

We might then use the discomfort and tension as an excuse to down some pills, smoke marijuana, or go to the bar!

When we become irritated or angry, we cause the purely biological type of stress, outlined earlier in this chapter, to begin to run its course. We literally make the slow line (or the person writing a check who is making it slow) into a threat and into a sort of ego enemy.

The body does its job of responding with hormones and various changes, as if it were facing some sort of threat. But by being irritated, you are literally forcing your body to react.

In the long run—after years of daily bouts of irritation—the damage to the body breaks out in serious illness. We tire and damage ourselves through our indulging our emotions. In other words, we are literally killing ourselves a little at a time.

I am reiterating the point again not for mere repetition but for emphasis. Most of us are so used to reacting and over-reacting that we do not realize how reactive we are or what effect it is having on the body.

Sooner or later many people are told that stress is killing them. How much better it would be if they had seen the light many years earlier. Is it really worth the wear and tear on your body, and the decreasing control (with or without painful suppression), just to get a little high from judging and resenting someone who is slow?

Some people will say “I don’t get angry or impatient at a slow line.” Maybe not, but how about traffic, your boss, your kids, your husband, your wife, your neighbor, bills, or your mother in law?

The body is able to repair itself, if you could learn to be less emotional about things, so that the body has time and no new stresses to divert its resources.
Remember, it is resentment that separates us from faith and patience; and without patience and faith, the body is compelled to comply with the resentment and compensate with fight or flight stress reactions.

“Change your attitude, change your destiny” is literally true, especially when it comes to emotions, because of the stress reactions that emotions contribute to.

We cannot help our natural biological reactions. We can’t stop ourselves from being startled if someone says “boo” behind us. But you do have control over whether you become resentful when they startle you. If you find yourself becoming angry or irritated at them (or at yourself), I guarantee there is resentment behind it.

As I will discuss later in this chapter, we can learn to have an attitude which is less emotional and resentful--so that our body is not compelled to react to stresses that we create for ourselves. We can learn not to add emotional reaction to the purely physical ones.

We are all aware that becoming angry at slow lines, irritated at a traffic jam, angry at our husband, impatient with our children, or irritated and frustrated over money issues are harmful to our bodies. We are all aware of headaches and tummy aches from being upset.

But many of us are not aware that these and similar symptoms are just the tip of the iceberg. Underneath the obvious surface symptoms are thousands or millions of subtle changes down to the cellular level.

That is why forgiveness and patience are not just words but are real principles that protect our body from the tension, toil, wear, and draining aspects of general adaptive stress response. And the most insidious precursor (to the general adaptive stress response) of all is resentment.
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.