

Change your Attitude, Change your Stress

By James Bone

Feeling tense, a little anxious, more tired than usual, memory letting you down, concentration not as good, more frequent colds, recovery from exercise or injury taking longer, and don't mention that when you look in the bath room mirror in the morning, the person you see doesn't quite look so good any more!

Maybe you're feeling a little STRESSED!

No wonder with all that happens in our lives – work, family, interest rate rises, volatile stock market, rising living costs including rising rent and house prices, negative news broadcasts, conflicts which can occur between people over differences of opinion, social pressures, high expectations – there are so many high expectations in this day and age – to achieve, be successful, to make money, to get the best marks at school, and of course there is also so much COMPETITION, whether in business or the work place – everyone needing to market themselves in this now competitive world we live in.

It all sounds a little negative, but in truth many people actually thrive with these types of pressures. Why (you may ask) do some people thrive, while others, maybe your self, tend to succumb to stress? The truth is there are many factors, but one factor clearly stands out, and that is your ATTITUDE.

“Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference” Winston Churchill

Your attitude can greatly determine your stress. Is your attitude causing you stress?

Hans Selye, one of the founding researchers on stress, once said “Adopting the right attitude can convert a negative stress into a positive one.”

Dr. Viktor E. Frankl, a survivor of the holocaust, was quoted as saying "The last of the human freedoms (is) to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

Forgetfulness and Memory Damage

The problem is that we can FORGET we have choice – a choice towards our own attitude! Stress in fact causes the brain to forget – to forget what it was like to be **not** stressed. Research in the area of neuroscience has shown that cortisol, one of the hormones connected to chronic stress, can actually damage the parts of the brain concerned with memory. What's more, chronic stress can damage the part of the brain called the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for modifying stress and emotional responses.

So we can feel as though we are stuck with our stress and not even be aware that our attitude could be causing our stress.

However, not all is lost!

Neuroscience has also shown that the brain is very flexible and malleable and has the capacity to learn new ways of thinking and doing. Maybe we feel we are stuck with our ways of thinking and our attitudes toward things, but in truth this is fallacy. We are stuck because we think we are stuck.

This has always been the basic premise of YOGA – that we become limited by our own minds limitations. However through PRACTICE we can change our thinking and our attitudes. Just as when you do yoga on your mat you practise to move in new ways, you can practise to think in new ways – **MEDITATION** is one way to start.

Practice, practice, practice – the 3 Ps of Sadhana

REMEMBER the KEY is PRACTICE – practise a little bit, but often, to slowly change old habits into new habits. In Yoga, when we have decided to do a special practice to achieve something over time – we call this a Sadhana. Begin your sadhana NOW to bring a new positive attitude to your life. Try this for the next 40 days and see what happens.

Inner Truth – the real me

So what is this positive attitude one needs to cultivate to decrease stress?

"Seek out that particular mental attribute which makes you feel most deeply and vitally alive, along with which comes the inner voice which says, "This is the real me," and when you have found that attitude, follow it." James Truslow Adams

Yoga calls this attitude your inner truth – it is not something you are falsely trying to produce. However, along the way to finding your inner truth – it doesn't hurt to fake it a little – better to see the glass half full than half empty!

*A Positive Attitude is the ability to open our eyes and minds
to where limitless wonders are discovered*

Passion

To continue to practise you need to also stay MOTIVATED.

*"Passion is in all great searches and is necessary to all creative endeavours"
W. Eugene Smith*

We can motivate ourselves by desiring to escape the pain of stress, but it would be better to focus on the feeling of wellbeing and wholeness which comes from finding your own inner truth / positive attitude.

"The remarkable thing we have is a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day.

We cannot change our past...

We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way....

We cannot change the inevitable....

The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude."

Charles R. Swindoll

"A strong positive attitude will create more miracles than any wonder drug"
P. Neal