

## **Sample Excerpt From The Stress Resistant Thinking Sequential Report**

If someone asked you where most of your stress came from, you'd probably answer that it was your job, or family pressures, or not having enough time or money. You probably wouldn't tell them that your thinking was creating much of your stress.

Yet your thinking plays a larger role in producing your stress than you may imagine. Fortunately, learning how to change your thinking is not all that difficult. You can spot the specific ways your thinking makes life more stressful than it has to be and you can turn that stress-producing thinking into stress-resistant thinking.

### **Self-Created Stress**

Feeling stressed is, and always has been, a two part-process. First you need something out there to trigger your stress, and then you need to perceive that trigger as stressful. Only after both steps do you feel stressed. You empower these external events and situations by the ways in which you view them.

Your attitudes and beliefs about any potentially stressful situation or even determine how much stress you experience. By changing the way you look at a potentially stressful situation, you can change the way you emotionally react to that situation. An important secret of stress management is knowing how you create your stress and knowing how to change that thinking.

In short, you can control the stress you feel. You play an active part in creating your own stress. Consider these distressing scenarios:

- You feel stressed because you have to give a presentation at work tomorrow to win an important new client.
- You feel stressed at the supermarket because you got trapped in the slowest moving checkout line.
- You feel stressed because your picky Aunt Agnes is coming to stay with you for the whole week.

- You feel stressed because your neighbor is playing his music too loudly.

In each case, the assumption is that the external situation or event produces the stress. And there is some truth to this. However, the reality is, presentations, slow lines, difficult relatives, and loud music do not, in themselves, have the power to make you stressed. In order for stress to be created, you have to see that situation as stressful.

### **All in the Spin**

If it were only the external situation that caused stress, then everyone would feel the same stress when placed in the same situation. Clearly, this is not the case. What is stressful for somebody else may be less stressful for you, or maybe not stressful at all. Consider these scenarios again:

- A few days before your presentation, you learn that you have been offered a better job at another company. Feeling a little less stressed now?
- You're in the slow moving supermarket line and pick up a magazine that intrigues you. Now you're pleased because you can finish the article before you check out.
- You are reliably informed that your Aunt Agnes has rewritten her will and made you the sole beneficiary to her large estate. Would you like to stay a bit longer, Aunt Agnes?
- Noisy Neighbor? Big deal – you just signed for a wonderful place across town. More space, less rent. Blast that music!

It is not only the triggering event that causes the stress, but your perceptions and expectations about that potentially stressful event that determine how stressed you feel.

Want to feel less stress? Think straight! Misinterpreting facts and distorting situations triggers more stress. You need to understand what your Thinking Errors are. There are seven, all outlined below.

### **Catastrophize and Awfulize**

On a low stress day, many people will catastrophize or awfulize, and turn an everyday hassle into a major tragedy. If you escalate a hassle to a catastrophe,

you also elevate your stress levels. The reality is, unless you are about to have a baby, waiting in a line, being stuck in traffic, or not finding the remote is just a small hassle or inconvenience, and should be viewed as such.

Ask yourself these two questions:

- How important is this really?
- Will I remember this in 3 years, 3 months, 3 weeks, or even 3 days?

By challenging and disputing your exaggerated thinking, you begin to look at the situation differently. And as a consequence, you feel less stress.

### **Minimize the Can't-Stand-Its**

Here's how this works:

1. Find some hassle, situation, or circumstance that you do not like.
2. Then turn that "I don't like it" into an "I can't stand it!"
3. Now, utter with conviction:

*I can't stand it when I have to wait in long lines!*

*I can't stand it when I'm caught in traffic!*

When you say and believe that you can't stand it, then you can't. You become more upset and more stressed than you would if you merely disliked that same something.

When you recognize that there is a can't-stand-it contributing to your emotional stress, step back, and challenge and dispute your thinking. Ask yourself:

- Can I really not stand it, or do I really mean I don't like it?
- Is my over-reacting here helping me in any way? Or is it making things worse?
- Couldn't I really stand it for quite a bit longer? And if someone were willing to fork out some big bucks, couldn't I stand this for a very long time?

### **Stop What-If-Ing**

Also on slow days, when boredom is in the air, people tend to stress themselves out by wondering about what could go wrong. You may be a what-if-er. Whenever you what-if, you take a situation or event that could happen, and make it into something that probably will happen. This way of thinking can and does add a lot of stress to your life.

Unpleasant things happen. Could they happen to you? Yes. Will they? Maybe. However, most of the things you worry about will never happen. But this doesn't stop you from worrying about the possibility. What-if, what-if, what-if...

To cut out your what-if-ing, ask yourself these three thought-straightening questions:

- Realistically, what are the chances of this feared even really happening?
- AM I over-worrying about this?
- When my life is nearing its end, will this really be something I should have worried about?

### **Overgeneralizing**

If you overgeneralize, you cause yourself more stress than you need. If you think things like "nobody in this town can drive!" or "This country is run by idiots!", then you are most likely an overgeneralizer.

Though there may be some truth to these statements, they are not helping your stress level. By thinking in terms of all or nothing, good or bad, right or wrong, you make yourself more stressed than you have to be.

Try this:

- Ask yourself if you are seeing only one small part of that person's overall behavior and too quickly assuming that this sample truly characterizes that person as a whole.
- Try to think of individuals or situations that do not fit into your overgeneralization.
- Look out for language that reflects this all-or-nothing thinking – words like "always" and "never" lean toward overgeneralization.

The reality is, the world and the people in it rarely fall into discrete, easily identified categories. Find the gray areas and save yourself the stress.

**Mind Reading and Conclusion Jumping**

You do this whenever you believe that you know something is true, when in fact, it may not be true at all. Say you have a brown spot on the back of your hand. Immediately, you conclude that it's terminal cancer.

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