

A New Definition Of Stress For The 21st Century

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You can either be right or you can be happy and successful, but you can't be both.

Your success in all areas of life depends upon your ability to harmonize and mould yourself around the world. Those who try to mould the world around themselves will meet with much heartache, stress, frustration and ultimately failure.

What is Stress?

This is the question we will be looking at today and I will share a new definition of stress that helps me to look at stress in a more manageable way. The essential skill of the twenty first century is the ability to effectively process life. And those who are stressed, are stressed not because their life is stressful, but because they have an ineffective system for processing life.

Over the past few years it seems as if 'all you can eat' buffets have become hugely popular. They sell the promise of unlimited food, yet really who can eat more than one normal sized dinner?

Even though the opportunity is to eat all you can, our digestive capacity limits our consumption.

In just the same way our emotional digestive system limits our consumption of life. So we can only experience as much as we're able to consume.

Life may bring us an unending and unlimited array of experiences, like the ultimate 'all you can eat' buffet. However because we clog ourselves up with undigested emotions about what happened yesterday, last week and what may happen next week, we do not have the ability to take in many new fresh experiences.

Everyday we have hundreds of opportunities pass in front of us. People that would make great Lovers, Friends. Business opportunities that could fulfil us, bring us great wealth. Activities that would thrill us. People, situations and books that hold the solutions we seek. Yet we are so consumed with our ex, our shitty job, our poverty and our boring life that we don't even notice that these possibilities exist.

The twentieth century made more progress over the material world than the rest of the entire preceding 7,000 years since Civilizations first began. It changed the entire nature of possibilities that we can envisage for our lives. It made these social changes largely through advances in manufacturing processes.

A manufacturing process is the sequence of events that have to happen for raw materials to be turned out into a finished product that someone wants to buy. At the start of the twentieth century, few cars a day were made. It was a time consuming, labour intensive and expensive process. By the start of the

twenty first century the incremental time and expense of each car's production was a fraction of what it had been and many millions a year were produced.

Streamlined production in all areas has made what was once prohibitively expensive to become consumed by the mainstream Consumer.

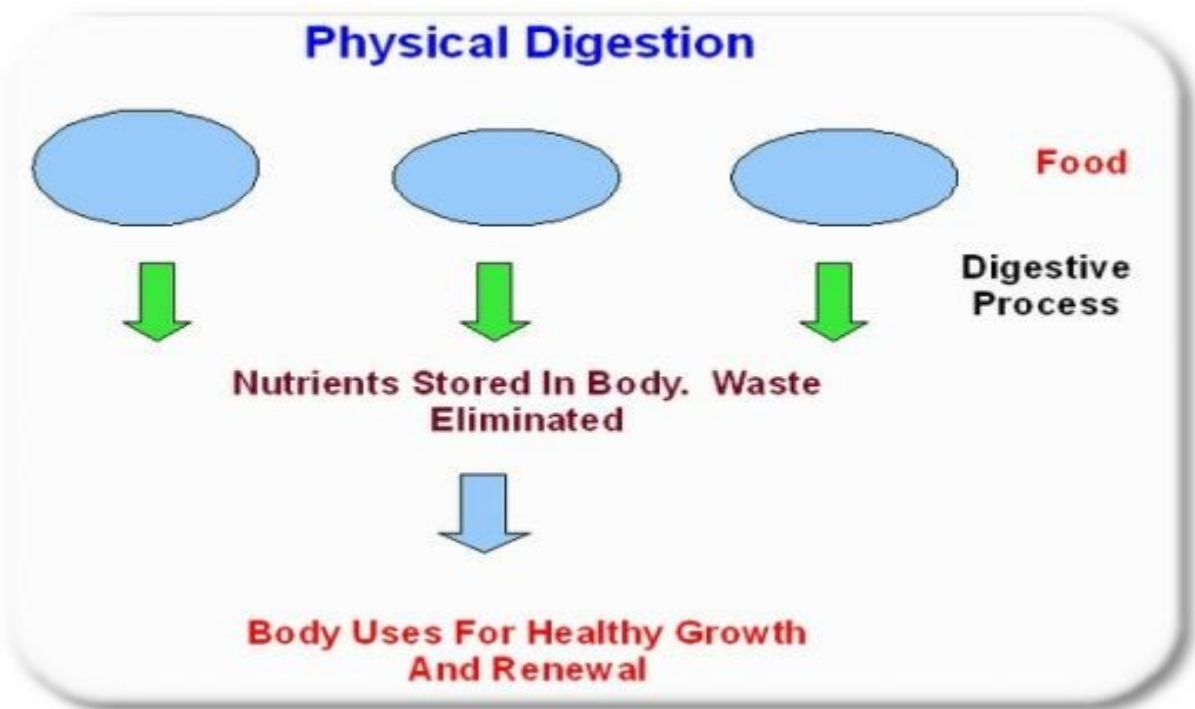
Yet what is to come in our century will make the changes in the last look positively pedestrian. The skill of the twenty-first century will not be the processing of physical resources.

Growth in all of it's forms. Personal, economic, social and spiritual is limited by consumption. If we don't have the ability to pay it attention, we won't buy, interact with it or learn from it.

Just as the body needs the nutrients from food to feed it's growth, our mind needs the experiences that life brings to grow to the next level of evolution.

And so growth is limited by our ability to process and digest the events of life emotionally and free our attention to consume more.

Stress Is A Term For Emotional Indigestion



A diagram of the physical digestive system.



Diagram of the emotional digestive system

Emotional Stress Is Due To Poor Digestion

So the skill of the twenty first century will be the speed with which we can digest experiences. How quickly we can get over feelings of anger, frustration, bitterness and disappointment.

Almost always we do get over these feelings. However we usually hold onto them for days or weeks. Just as a clogged up physical digestion brings problems and affects the bodies ability to maintain health so too does a clogged up emotional system.

Your mind needs fresh thoughts as much as your body needs fresh nutrients. There is a constant supply of fresh ideas and experiences clamouring to be digested, but the bottlenecks in emotional digestion are causing a pile up which feels overwhelming.

We have to update our process of digesting life to get up to speed with today's pace of life. This digestive system, like the physical processing of goods, has a specific process. A sequence of tasks that have to be passed through to achieve the polished, finished product.

The finished product, in this instance will be the experience broken down to stored meanings and memories. Cleared from conscious attention, but available to recall from your stored data bank of past experiences whenever necessary.

The defining skill to thrive in the twenty first century will be the speed of moving an experience from present to past. It is this ability that determines the velocity of your life experience. Meaning the number of experiences you encounter. Which really is a measure of your openness and acceptance of life.

Which amounts to the central question of life...

Am I here to devour life or cringe and hide from life?

So the faster you can process negative experiences, the quicker you remove them from your experience and move on. And it tends to be negative experiences that grip your attention for longer, whereas more pleasant experiences typically zip through. Part of the joy from them comes from their freshness.

So back to my implied opening promise, a definition of stress.

Stress is the conscious awareness of a thought.

Why so? Isn't that a little extreme?

Because when we are enthralled with life we lose self consciousness and don't stop to be aware of what we are thinking. And because once we hold a conscious thought we start to limit our capacity. And what starts limiting our capacity is the origin of stress. If you've read any traditional views of stress, you'll be aware that stress is about exceeding the individual's capacity to cope.

It is easy to stop a fire when it is just a spark, but very difficult once it has turned into a raging inferno.

So the key to managing stress is to never let it build up to a state where you lose your ability to think clearly and deal with things. Developing a more effective Emotional Digestive System is advanced stress management. It avoids stress building up and taking control of your emotional well-being.

But isn't it necessary to think?

Of course. But the quicker you can get the thought of your mind, the quicker you are free to fully engage with the next situation. What happens too often is we are still thinking about the last scene, when the play of life has moved on to the next scene.

In the following pages we will be discussing how to develop a better system to digest life...

Managing Stress Is Like...

In part one of this series we talked about [what stress is](#). My definition was that stress is the conscious awareness of a thought. Today we'll start to talk about managing stress.

Most people don't define themselves as being stressed until they reach a point somewhere close to meltdown. Yet there's a range that begins with the with conscious thought and builds up pressure until you reach the tipping point that causes a breakdown.

Becoming more skilled at dealing with stress means getting an awareness that you are on the road to being stressed earlier and earlier. As you develop your awareness and speed with which you can process the details of life, you free up more brainpower and clarity to deal with the situations and problems in your life. Also the quicker you deal with these aspects, the less chance there is of fear and strong emotions biasing and distorting your thought processes.

What happens when you are slower to deal with problems and thoughts is that your brain gets pulled in many different directions. It starts to work on one issue, then you feel a pang of fear about some impending situation and so that becomes your priority.

The result is that you start down one journey and change direction before reaching the end. And you keep doing this until you reach the end of the day and realize you haven't finished any, but you're completely exhausted. And in the morning you have to start again only with more being added.

If you could focus your full attention on one thought, you'd have your full brainpower focused on it and so you could process it quicker. There is an almost perfect analogy to stress.

Housekeeping.

I know this because neither my Wife, nor I, like housework. And so it's something that we've had to work hard to consciously keep under control.

If you let things slip in your house, if you take a couple of days and slack off, you wake up the next morning to a mess. There's a whole backlog of tasks that have to be done just to get to a blank slate.

Then there are continually going to be more mess created, more jobs that need doing as you go through the day. And it is much harder to get a house tidy than it is to keep it tidy.

This is true also of the mind. We're always producing and encountering problems, conflicts and cognitive loose ends. In time these almost always will be resolved, but when you have them in your head simultaneously, they

cause your brain to split into too many different directions.

Reader's Comments

Yes Rob,

you are very right; if we are Facing with Stress in the Now, we have to Deal with it in the Now... or else it will pile up and add to more stressful energies and frustration... it is also true that if we did come with a mind, then we also did come with he tools to deal with it in ourselves...

When you mention stress, lots of questions come to my mind...

where is the source of stress?

How did it originate?

If we know that, we can terminate it too...

Are we the cause of stress as well as the effect/result of it?

if so, how do we get to the core of stress to nip it?

Are the events of life stressful in themselves or is it in the way we deal with it without proper tools?

Is stress an accented energy?

Can we relate stress to our breath?

Can oxygenation dissipate the energy of stress?

Yes, if we wake up to ourselves within to witness the process of life as it goes on inside us, physically, emotionally and mentally... if we can manage to connect these aspects of our being we can see how they influence one another.. for this, we have to be alert on ourselves, lovingly listening to what our body has to say or what we are thinking in the mind both of which gets the emotions caught in between...

stress happens when we have lost our true power of knowing to our sleepiness of not-knowing... in our state of wakeful knowing, we know exactly what is happening to all aspects of our being... in knowing, we are being present all over our being, giving total attention to it all... as soon as the thought energy is being directed to some aspects of our life, it becomes an accented energy that concentrates over a specific area of our energy field and in keeping on staying in the not-knowing sleepiness, the stress gathers enough momentum to take over our sleepy-self... once we are lost to that, we have set ourselves up to be the victims of powerlessness; this can only happen when we have given our true power of knowingness away to laze around in sleepiness; this is what we do as humans mostly... anything can take over us when we are in the not-knowing state of consciousness...

well, what is the way out? It is the same way as we got into it... how did we get into it? By turning our Witness-mode off.. to come out of it, we can turn our Witness-Mode on and watch what has been taking place when the Presence was away from our being...

Lovingly, be present with yourselves and watch how it unfolds all through the Present times and Absent times and make sure to return your Presence back to yourselves... it is amazing that we take off ourselves at times... make sure we return and take inventory of whatever happened when we were away... this is only possible if one is a true life-enthusiast who just wants to know life as it comes and thus live consciously... this is our evolutionary step - to Being CONSCIOUS HUMAN. Whenever we are not-Conscious, we are giving our power away and are being in the default/Unconscious where there is no presence to observe what is so...

Feel the body, listen to it and watch its language; you may get access to what simply goes on in your mind; or watch/observe and be with your thoughts as you think without directing it else where, you may come to touch with what your body is doing as your mind goes on with this process... whichever serves you in the best interest of yourself, is the best way for you... nothing comes to us that we cannot handle; it is in conscious-handling of the energies we create unconsciously, that we evolve - in and out and through stress and whatever we can define that affects us..

Always remember to look at how we feel, because in becoming aware of just the body and the mind, we tend to forget the emotions that play as the meat in the sandwich! Watch what emotions push inside

out and vice versa; watch them as they shuttle between mind and body... and ask yourselves -

AM I MY BODY?

AM I MY THOUGHTS?

AM I MY EMOTIONS?

If I am not my mind, body or emotions, what AM I?

WHO AM I BEING?

What roles do my body, emotions and thoughts have in my Being myself and in not Being myself?

- it is impossible to not-know the answer yourselves if you truly lovingly submit yourselves to the above... it is a possibility!

Sereena.

Could You Cope If This Happened To You?

I wanted to try to move this series onto a more practical level. So I have made up a hypothetical Character, Tom and shown three diary entries. The idea was to demonstrate the need to deal with things quickly to move them from bothering you to being resolved in your mind as quickly as you can.

It quite often happens that a number of bad events happen in clusters. So if you take too long resolving them they pile up one on another.

I know it might sound like I'm glossing over the seriousness of these events as if they are just minor details. I'm not. I understand that they are not simple things to clear in your mind. But the fact is that unless you do, you'll suffer more stress and be at greater risk of becoming overwhelmed.

Here are the three diary entries.

Thursday 14th June

Things still aren't going well with Kate. She's so moody and grumpy. I love her so much, but can't work out why she's treating me so badly.

I'm sure there's something going on with her and Jeff. I just wish she would open up and tell me what the problem is. Not knowing is the worst thing. I'm constantly walking on eggshells.

The worry that she's going to leave me is always on my mind nagging at me.

Tuesday 19 June

Found out at work today that the company is in takeover talks. The company who want to buy them are known for cutting costs and employees. In the current economic situation I'm going to struggle to get another job, so I'm very worried about it.

Kate's still being cold with me. I wonder if Jeff's going to that conference.

Friday 29 June

Dad had a heart attack last night. Been at the hospital all day. He looks so frail I can hardly recognise him as my Dad. He always seemed so strong when I was little.

Mum's devastated. I've got to keep it together for her sake. But I don't know how much more I can cope with.

Things are no clearer with Kate.

Work is horrible. I don't want to go back there.

Everyone's worried about their job. The atmosphere is terrible. Really tense and everyone's snappy.

Life sucks.

Not resolving your mind of a worry is like a Runner in a hurdle race having the first hurdle added to the second, then the first and second added to the third. Once you have a second worry it's going to be harder to deal with the first.

The more worries, things you have to do and unresolved or undeveloped ideas you have on your mind, the less mental horsepower you have to devote to it.

Stress is not a problem of not being able to cope. Stress is the result of not dealing with things as they crop up. It's not breaking a big thing into it's separate elements.

Focused attention has so much more power than diffused attention. Why so many people are stressed today is because they are trying to do too many things, so they are doing them with diffused attention.

Whatever your goal might be, whether it's to achieve success, to live a more balanced life, to grow spiritually or to develop a better relationship, the greatest step you can take towards achieving that goal is through gaining clarity and peace of mind. A scattered and agitated mind can do nothing.

So here's the best thing you can do to achieve that.

Get a piece of paper and pen and list or draw everything that crosses your mind. Capture every thought or word that crops up without any judgement or analysis.

If you have a thought or a feeling, it is there for a good reason. And if you fail to recognise that reason it will recur and increase in intensity until you do and act on it. So just make a note of it, regardless of how inane it might seem.

Do this for five minutes or even ten, until you run out of steam. Here's an example start of such a list.



Reader's Comments

no connection with husband

moved to Florida and son not adjusting well and wants to move back to NY. Son acting out.

Miss my sister in NY

Financial problems, can't get ahead.

81-year-old father 2 hours away and needs help because wife came down with dementia. He is going to die soon taking care of her.

Step-daughter getting married in NY and have to book flight and figure out where to get money from.

Feeling alone and isolated

How Did You Overcome Your Stress

This was originally posted to request real life situations. I have left it in as the comments might help put the posts in perspective.

I have pretty much ready the next instalment of how to process the information, but before you read that I have a mission for you... should you choose to accept it.

First, let me set the stage a little.

People get all hung up and paralysed when they are stressed. But 99.9% of the time it passes. Their Boss quits and work becomes much less of a problem, their money problems pass, they stop worrying about their ex and start a new relationship or whatever.

We always worry about stuff that's temporal, which means that what we worry about always changes and so passes. Sometimes our worries come to life and then we deal with them. Sometimes they bring new worries and so we just get new sources of stress. But the individual things that we were worrying about always move to a place where they stop bothering us.

So what we are looking to do is get to the end goal, move from stressed to resolved about an issue, quicker, so it causes us less discomfort. By speeding up the natural process, we avoid or minimise the discomfort.

So today, I'm asking for your help.

You have a whole data bank filled with years of experiences of successfully overcoming stress and observing other people deal or not deal with situations.

You may never have thought of it that way. You might just have thought 'time heals' or 'it just became unimportant'. But there's a sequence of changes in your mind that happened so that the event no longer causes you stress or emotional pain.

So if you could, please add your experiences, or those you've observed, as many as you can and in as much detail as you can. Then I'll try to gather them together, analyse and figure out the many different ways that caused people to process events and how we can use these natural processes to get rid of stresses quicker.

The reason I want to get this from you now, is because after the next post, you might start looking at the situation differently. I want your raw experiences, to see if there is something I have missed.

Please detail the situation, what happened and the end result.

Looking back on it, what has changed?

How do you/they feel differently about the situation?

I seem to get stressed out at any event that does not meet my expectations. If I am not able to control the situation, or environment around me.. it stresses me out. I am very sensitive to noises, smells, and sights more so than most other people. What I do, is get upset and usually try to avoid or run away from the problem.

Sometimes the problems goes away on its own. Sometimes, I have to take some action to change the situation or remove myself from the situation.

But, the small stresses that happen daily do, over a period of time, take their toll on my emotional, physical and psychological well-being.

Hi Rob,

I could say that I've really been thru a lot in life .. oh well, I think everybody is ... I don't want to compare the hardships and trials I had underwent with anyone as I know we have our own battle or struggles uniquely for us. Even now, every time I thought of how I manage to overcome those fears, struggles or stress, I still am amazed that I am the person I am and where I am now to where I used to be...

I'm not saying I'm successful but if being able to cope up my stress and being the stronger person I am now a lot better than I used to be is considered a success then I'm way too successful in that aspect.

I am the kind of person that I think one of my gift is my instinct. My instinct are correct most of the time tho I don't usually have it as

my basis what I do is that I stick with what reality gives me..
Example, If my instinct tells me that this person is somewhat I cannot give my trust with .. I won't automatically stop knowing that person or I will avoid him in an instant what I'll do is I'll do the opposite, I'll know him more but of course there's that reservation because of what the instincts told me and then try to validate and see whether my instincts are correct or not.

I will deal with what reality presents me. sometimes my instincts fails as well.. so I'd say that I stick with what reality or the facts of life tells me ...

Yes, facing reality is the way I deal stress. I'll boldly face what the reality has for me no matter how painful, no matter how hard, no matter how it tears me apart. It's like I'm imagining there's a big wind trying to stop me from going to my destination and though no matter how that wind try to put me down, hurt me or keep me away from my goal, I'll keep pushing and walking or even crawling to get to my destination and once I'm there there's another level to go through..

For me, the sooner you realize what's the truth/ what the reality is the better. Then once I have accepted reality and what it presents to me, I'll contemplate on what are the possible actions I can do, to face it , I would usually chose the one that will benefit a lot or those that has a lot more advantages not only to me for the scenario itself making me more better and learning from that situation. I know it's easier than done.

Cause sometimes I myself feel weak as well just like the many others who doesn't seem to know where to start once stress came in so I gather all my strength and pray from the Almighty one to have the courage to face reality and after I did the first bold step of accepting reality the rest just follows, and before I know it I already did overcome it or the stress just pass by leaving me more bolder and stronger and a lot better person that I used to be =)

Hi Rob,

What Maggie says makes a lot of sense to me. I can think of 2 instances in my life where things that I valued were removed from my life.

One was the death of an animal I was close to and the other a relationship with someone who had been the love of my life for many years.

In both cases I had difficulty facing up to the truth. In the former there was no going back but in the latter this was more difficult as there was the potential not of going back but of going forwards to something better. It has taken me a long time to accept that although I have left the door open there is no evidence that the other person wants to move forwards with me.

I still struggle with this at times but can now see that there is the same and possibly better potential with other human beings which undoubtedly exist in the world.

If I were to have the time over again I would have faced reality much quicker, left the door open still but moved on to a happier life. I am finally starting to understand the power of the choice between being right and being happy and I think what stopped me moving on sooner was the feeling that I could have done better.

I told the other person on many occasions that I accepted my part in the downfall of our relationship but they were unable/did not want to meet me half way and thus I ended up living in limbo for the best part of 2 years.

THIS IS A WASTE OF PRECIOUS LIFE AND I NEVER WANT TO DO THIS AGAIN.

So I agree - face the facts, deal with them, look at your options, leave doors open as long as you can but get on with life - it is wonderful, exciting and not to be wasted!!!!

1. had to decide between two choices of health insurance.. One is a comprehensive world wide cover, but very expensive.. the other covers me and my family in Singapore and short travel, relatively inexpensive and can be paid out of pension plan (no cash out flow).. I had to take in the possibility of the insurance coverage required if I decide to return to India after 5 years..

I was searching the internet for various options, the cost of an insurance plan in India etc etc.. the research process itself was a bit stressful.. made some reasonable search and arrived at a decision.. stress immediately subsided..

the stress arising from the research was mainly because I had a lot of other things to do and so could not give it full attention..

2. a local educational institution asked me to give some lectures on risk management..I tentatively accepted the offer.. was a bit stressed that I had a lot of work to do to make the lecture successful (prepare slides, make lecture notes, exam paper, mark the paper etc etc).. I decided to decline the offer as I was not prepared for the commitment of time.. stress immediately subsided..I do not feel that I have lost an opportunity..

3. unresolved issues at work place cause stress.. I tend to procrastinate and that makes it worse.. I am sometimes not able to motivate myself to get things moving if I think it is not very important, but unresolved issues do cause stress..but if I get myself to work on it, it will get resolved, but I lose the opportunity work on more important things..

it is less important to me personally, but these are quite important for the organization (my values do not match those of my organization's)

Hey,

I sang! I love the old gospel songs of my childhood, and I have found if I sing them out loud - it is impossible to be depressed. It puts me in a good mood and I can handle anything.

K

I can relate very well with Fred's comments, although I am still "in the middle" of trying to move forward from a 20 year marriage that ended in divorce last fall. With a picture firmly planted in my mind that we were forever, divorce to me was outside the realm of possibility. With two young daughters that don't deserve this loss and a future now void of the hopes and dreams I thought were our legacy, I am still mired in sadness.

I've read and searched and I know I need to "move on" and accept what can't be changed. Accepting for me though, ends up feeling like being OK with what's happened and I'm not OK with it.

Moving on feels like abandoning my dreams and I don't want to abandon any of it. I'm stuck trying to hold onto something that's not even there to hold onto. I'm conscience of how ridiculous that is, but to no apparent good.

I know things will eventually get better. There is light in my tunnel and I'm thankful for what I still have.

Just last Saturday, as I sat and read a book, I sneezed. From the other room where my youngest daughter sat watching TV, came a sugar sweet - -

"Bless yooou" !

As I took in the richness of that moment, I started to cry tears of gratitude realizing how lucky I really am still.

Nevertheless I guess I fall into the category of 'not' dealing with my stress very well. I look forward to others experience in dealing with loss.

Thanks.

Hi, Rob, and all:

Like Sharon, I, too, tended to feel stress when events didn't meet my expectations. I have found that it is possible to go into a situation or event with no expectations for the event. Doing this also seems to give me more options for actions and reactions to whatever occurs. Most often, these events turn out either positively or at least, neutral in effect on me.

One of my stresses is due to the fact that my mother is ageing. I don't even live on the same continent as she does, however I do what I can. I try to call her every week or 10 days. It doesn't remove the stress...because I'd like to be there and take care of her.

I really enjoyed hearing Brian say how he valued his daughter saying "bless you" after a sneeze!

I think when I become stressed I have a tendency to forget the good and just become focused on the bad. Which leads into my marriage. Sometimes I can really hold a grudge against my husband.

He will have apologized and I know he feels bad, but for some reason I am still angry. I HATE when I do that!

I would hate for someone to do that to me! You briefly talked about forgiveness earlier..I need to learn that. I think forgiveness can also relieve us of A LOT of unwanted stress.

You Have To Clarify To Relieve Stress

Most people try to resolve issues at too general and too broad a scale. For example, say someone has just lost their Parent. If you asked them how they felt about it, they might snap at you, 'How do you think I feel?'

Underpinning their answer is a common assumption, that everyone feels the same way about things, but actually they vary enormously. I used to Volunteer for the Samaritans. As part of that I took many calls from bereaved people. There was a huge variety of responses, from upset to relieved to delighted. Essentially what the Samaritans do is provide an anonymous place where people can say the stuff they really feel that they couldn't ever say to someone they knew.

So before you can resolve something, you have to accurately pinpoint the cause.

Somewhere I worked once had a Maintenance Man who was legendary for fixing everything with his hammer. The bigger the problem, the harder he'd hit it. I joked once that I hoped no-one ever asked him to fix the lights, because he'd hit it. I got the reply, 'It's funny you should say that because...'

To be a great hunter, engineer, sports person or whatever depends upon greater accuracy. And to be a great processor of life, you have to become more and more accurate at seeing the paths that have led to this situation.

Whatever situation that you are currently experiencing, it didn't just pop out of the sky. You have been travelling a path to it. It is a conflict between two or more elements.

You have to be here and here.

You have to do this, but you don't have enough time.

You want this type of relationship, but not with this person.

And usually in a problem situation, there are multiple paths that converge at the point you notice the problem.

Think of a problem as being like a car crash. All the cars involved have travelled from different origins and converged at the point of impact. If any one of them had taken a different turn-off they would not have the crash.

That's why awareness is so important. The more sensitive your level of awareness is, the earlier you can notice problems. And so you can become sensitive and aware enough to resolve issues before they become problems. Metaphorically, you take a turn off that helps you avoid the car crash.

So you want to identify the strands of the issue, then you want to know where these issues started from. It's all about breaking everything down into manageable chunks that you can then make decisions on.

I asked for examples I could use to demonstrate this and Diane kindly supplied some. Diane hit me with both barrels. She has many issues to deal with. I'm just going to use three of the issues because otherwise it's going to seem too repetitive.

Before I get into that though I want to make a point. I'm not great on being empathic or sympathetic, it's not a strength of mine, and sometimes I can seem hard and insensitive. What I can do well is strip away everything that isn't relevant and get back to the bare core issues.

The extent to which you can do this is equal to the degree of openness and honesty to which you can be. It's your mind that's clouding the issue. So you have to be willing to ask any question and truly examine how you feel about the issue.

Example of How To Analyse a Situation To It's Root

Issue – no connection with husband

What does that mean?

What do you want?

In a perfect world, how would that connection look like?

What is the cause (s) of that lack of connection?

Has it always been like that?

What is it that most bothers you?

If he died tomorrow, what would you feel, regret or miss?

If you left him, how would you feel?

When you first got together what attracted you to him?

What aspects of him do you like?

How would it feel to have that connection back?

What would it mean to you?

List the possible ways you could start to get that connection back?

Issues - moved to Florida and son not adjusting well and wants to move back to NY.

In which ways is he not adjusting well?

What exactly is happening that tells you this?

Could you have handled the move differently that would have helped him accept the move and so adjust better?

Is there a possibility of him moving back, you all moving back?

Is his not adjusting well because he thinks he can get you to move back?

Is his trouble adjusting because he is sulking at the move?

If he accepted the move, do you think he would adjust better?

Is his trouble adjusting, your responsibility?

Why is this bothering you?

Do you feel some guilt at his having to move?

Issues - 81-year-old father 2 hours away and needs help because wife came down with dementia. He is going to die soon taking care of her.

Could he move nearer to you?

Could you move nearer to him?

Could you get help for him?

How does he feel about it?

Would She be better in a home?

Are there other ways you could help, such as do their shopping and bills on-line?

If there is nothing practical you can do, can you support him emotionally?

What are your feelings?

What do you most want to do?

Once you then get all this information, which will probably be easier for you to lay out on paper, you'll be able to identify the strands of the issue. The next step is to identify the underlying conflict.

What is the underlying conflict for these situations. I don't know the answers to the questions so I have to make a guess. The first issue is too broad to be worth guessing at. But I'd say the second issue was based on guilt at the son having to move.

The conflict would be something like;

1. Wanting to be a good parent and wanting the Son to be happy.
2. Needing to move house.

I'd guess that behind the situation with Diane's father is also a guilt that She feels responsible for caring for him. Yet circumstances hold her back from being able to.

As in most cases stress comes from the conflict of wanting two mutually exclusive things. To be here and here at the same time. To do this and this at the same time.

Once you understand the conflict, you're ready to move to the next stage.

Step 3 will be about making your decision.

Hi Rob,

The essence of step two is to get to the core of the issue : tracing the causal threads and identifying the underlying conflict..

Let me try it with an issue I have at the moment..

Issue – no connection with my job/career

What does that mean?

I do not feel involved in my job/career..I do whatever I am expected to do, but I do not care about the results.. I do not have clear goals to work towards and neither I feel a desire to come up with clear goals in my current job..

I feel that my current job lacks meaning and is inconsequential.

it pays me reasonably well and provides flexibility of time to pursue my other interests (reading and commenting on this blog is one of them)

What do you want?

I don't really know..

I am looking for greater engagement and a sense of purpose in my career..

In a perfect world, how would that connection look like?

Fully absorbed.. Working towards clear goals.. touching and adding value to lives of others.. Effortless,

What is the cause (s) of that lack of connection?

my perception of lack of meaning which makes me think that it is not very important and so I do not give my 100%..

I know that I can get away with little effort.. there is neither a carrot nor a stick..perhaps unconsciously and consciously I sense that I get paid anyway and so I might as well focus my effort on areas that are more important to my development..

Has it always been like that?

yes, most of my working life

What is it that most bothers you?

not utilizing my full potential..

the fear I have about quitting the job is losing a steady income stream

If you lose the job tomorrow, what would you feel, regret or miss?

a bit of fear of losing a steady income, but I probably will not regret it much..I am sure I will not miss the job.. but I will miss the income, I will slightly miss the nice title, I will miss my nice office space

If you left the job now, how would you feel?

a bit anxious, but I will be motivated to move on to do what I think will be fulfilling to me.

What aspects of the job do you like?

as I said earlier.. the income, the title (a little bit), my office space (I have a wonderful sea facing cabin), some of my colleagues

How would it feel to have that connection back?

no desire to have that connection..

What are the alternatives?

I have just trained to be a professional coach and I have two clients at the moment.. I am thoroughly enjoying the coaching assignment.. I feel good connection , feel engaged and feel a sense of meaning and purpose..

I feel good and competent as a coach..I want to do this for a few more months before I go into it full time..

I have some anxiety about whether I will be able to make a living out of this..

The Conflict:

I want to do a more meaningful job.. I have identified an option and working towards it..

I want my steady income to continue.. I am anxious that I might get bored with coaching as well

Situation in a nutshell:

I have been with the same man for 8 years. I knew him and was with him when I was younger as well, for a year, but we split and spent 10 years apart until we ran into each other 10 years later. Seemed like a fairytale,

Love him to death but he's lazy, spends time working away, selfish and wants to keep things "just for himself" rude to my family and friends, does nothing with the 4 kids that call him dad...however, really is a nice guy. I feel sorry for him. Little white lies follow him everywhere and after 6 years I quit.

While he's away I get closer to a mutual friend and we hit it off big time. I am not a stupid girl, I know about the grass being greener and all that, I know lust ,I know fantasy I know all that...so I wait. I see the other guy every couple of days for a few weeks, end up feeling guilty and tell my partner. He freaks and I ask him to leave and give me some space. He wont and it takes 2 months to make him. He does but spends his night and day making me feel like crap and stalking me. He is crushed.

He hounds me and I end up feeling terrible, I still love the man so I take him back. Great for 2 months, admits he is wrong, great with the kids...hurts his back at work, becomes house mum while I work, now he does everything I used to do but my feelings still have not changed. I love him but I feel different, I don;t feel like the same person, and I feel so so guilty about that.

This has been going on for 2 years.

And no matter how I dissect and try and work it out....I cant seem to do it

My Comment

Some questions I would ask;

Do I love this man as a Lover or as a person?

Can I love someone without being in an intimate relationship with him?

Am I with him for love or for guilt?

Is he the person I want to spend the next few years with or even the next few months?

Do I want to live with someone who can't/won't be honest?

If someone is not honest about themselves, about how they feel, about what they want, about what they do, in other words they are not truly them, are you really in a relationship with them or with the phantom image they create?

What do I want from a relationship?

Do I want to be in a relationship out of fear, or guilt, or in one that is based on love?

There are many nice guys, is that the only criteria I have for a relationship?

How do my children feel about this man?

Is it benefiting them for me to be in this relationship?

To stay in a relationship I don't really want to be in, is that not condescending to the other person?

Is it a relationship of equals or am I supporting him?

Is my life about making someone, who is basically nice, happy even though the forces of life are giving him the evidence that what he is doing won't lead to what he wants?

If you stay, in ten years time, will you end up feeling bitter and resentful towards him?

Can you stay with him and still have everything you want in life?

The Secret To Resolving Stress

Resolving stress is not as difficult as everyone seems to think. You just have to make a decision about the issue.

If you look back on any stressful time, you'll find that it stopped being stressful at the point where you decided one way or another.

Maybe something happened that made your decision for you. Or maybe you got so fed up that you jumped off the fence.

But you'll find that the failure to make a decision is what keeps stress stuck in the treadmill of your mind.

In the last step, we talked about how to gain clarity and perspective on the issue by examining it from every angle, with no questions off limits.

That's important, because once you can see the issue in greater clarity with all the facts and subtle nuances laid out before you, the decisions are so much easier.

If you've ever made business decisions in an organisation where the management information is clearly given to you, you'll recognise that mostly the facts make the decision for you.

Here's another example. Everyone who's dealt with money knows that if you spend more than you have, you're going to run into trouble.

Yet, many, many people struggle with debt. Here in the U.K, last year debt levels reached £1.35 trillion or about \$2.7 trillion. That is more than the Gross Domestic Product. which is the value of everything made and sold in that year.

Sometimes you will see TV shows about people who have gotten into dire trouble and then they meet with an Advisor. The first thing the Expert does is sit down and analyse the figures. In almost all cases, there's nothing the Individual couldn't do themselves, but they kept running and hiding from the issue.

It's exactly the same with resolving other areas that cause stress. You just need the clarity to have all the different strands that make up the issue in front of you. That was covered in step 2.

The first part of deciding is to set your criteria. So you take all the questions you asked in step 2 and answer them individually.

Now you have the issue broken down into many small chunks, you decide where you stand on each chunk. These become your criteria.

Usually people struggle to make decisions because they are trying to make a huge decision without considering all the aspects and elements that make up the surface issue.

A small, start up business might ask the question, 'shall we advertise?' But that's thinking at too broad a level to gain any worthwhile answer.

A successful company will ask, 'how shall we allocate our advertising budget to TV, radio, print and internet?'

A really successful company will know the return they'll get for every place they advertise. So the decision is made for them to advertise and where. Their only question is 'how much can we invest before it stops being profitable?'

You aren't having to make one huge decision, just lots of little ones. This is how you refine what exactly it is that you want.

Let me give you a simple example. I have a web cam hooked up to the computer to make these videos. Now my two Daughters have been having great fun videoing themselves singing, dancing and generally shouting and doing stupid things and then re watching the clips.

Now they're having a great time with it, but it's very loud. So my wife and I are trying to talk, but we can't hear ourselves. If it were just a one-off it would be fine, but it happens quite frequently and so it becomes an issue that causes stress.

The basis of the stress is that we are torn. On the one hand we want to be good parents, we want them to be free and be able to have fun. Yet we also want to be able to sit and have a cup of tea and talk over our day.

So the stress comes from wanting two seemingly contradictory things and not seeing the underlying conflict. Once we parcelled the chunks out and defined the real issue, our creativity could be unleashed and the problem resolved.

The web cam can easily be moved to my Daughter's desk and laptop upstairs, where they can play about and downstairs doesn't sound like a rock concert.

So for example, yes, I do want them to be able to have fun. No, I don't want to live with constant shouting, screaming and fighting.

The best solution, therefore has to be one that matches up both needs, or as many as possible. Before you can identify the best solution though, you need to have identified your criteria. Answering the detailed questions gives you, your criteria. This is the first part of stage 3.

This all sound very confusing. Some issues are easy to identify the pro's and Con's why we want such and such or not want such and such.

Have you ever wanted to ask for something and were afraid to because we didn't want to appear pushy.

I personally have hit on a snag of a problem and am confused as how to resolved the issues.

Hi Rob,

From the very beginning of my "issue" people have been telling me to sit down, grab a pen and write. All the pro's and con's, to write about the issue and sit back and read it again in a few days. I have to admit that it's the only thing I haven't done yet. I keep thinking I have turned over every stone, gone to the bottom of every emotion involved, mulled over the facts but still the issue is unresolved. Maybe this is what I need to do to gain clarity. I like how you suggest learning what your criteria may be, what you will and wont settle for and what criteria would make you a happy person, I suppose I would work that bit out by writing it all down and showing myself. I will give it a go.

Hi rob,

I have two comments w.r.t to the fact that the stress is relieved when we make a decision one way or the other..

1. A logical conclusion would be "not having a choice is better than having one"..no decision is required and so no stress..
2. if we choose to break down every issue into smaller chunks and set criteria for them, then I feel we might be overwhelmed by this task..

I would like to hear from your genius your thoughts on how to set criteria on which issues to tackle and which ones to simply ignore..

In my experience, once we decide to act on a issue trying to resolve the underlying conflict, the very act of our thinking about it and acting on it adds fuel and energises the issue.."Don't wake-up sleeping dogs"

Resolve Stress In 6 Steps

Once you have made all the small decisions, the issue should be clearer to you. An insight may have jumped out at you, or you may have shifted your priorities and resolved the issue already. But if you haven't then we're at the stage of getting to a resolution.

The first step is to recognize that the fact you have this problem is a sign that you have reached the limits of your current thought system. You see, you hold beliefs that are continually tested as they interact with other beliefs. And when they meet with scenarios where they don't hold up, you hit a problem that can only be resolved by upgrading your thinking.

It's like Einstein said, the solution to a problem is always to be found at a higher level than the cause of the problem.

The cause of these problems is the fact that we are as narrow minded in our perception, as a horse walking down the road with blinkers on. We grow up in a specific culture, era and social environment and become limited through the 'rules' laid down by others and our experiences and observation of others experiences.

My Daughter asked me once why things were called what they were. Couldn't the moon be called the sun, men be called women and adults, children and so on? And it is simply the fact that because someone decided to call something, what they did, that we know them by that label. But it could have been very different.

It's possible that a different form of transport could have been invented before cars and instead of driving everywhere we would hover everywhere. Instead of using the telephone we could have had some other form of communication device that would make the world look very different.

What if the earliest species had not used aggression to win? How different would our history have been?

The point of this speculation is not to rue what could have been. There's no value in that. The point is, wherever we could have got to in that scenario, we still can meet up further along the track. But we can never get there while we believe that the past determines what the future can be

To just look over the social and technological progresses over the last 100 years has to demonstrate that there is so much more potential for what could be.

And all that stands between us and anything we want is the inability to see the path to it. And the inability to see the path, comes from the unwillingness to let go of the old path.

Which amounts to the fundamental question;

Do I want to be right or happy?

I've digressed from the details to the much bigger picture because you have to grasp how limited our perception is before you can open up to new possibilities. You will discover that many of the sources of your conflicts are due to your thinking being too limited.

If you are to find a solution to your problem that fits with all of your criteria than you are going to have to raise your level of thinking to a broad enough level that can include all possibilities.

Ok onto the methods of resolving stress.

Step 1 – Understand What You Really Want

Define the outcome that you want as clearly and specifically as you can. What happens so often is that people get obsessed by what they think they want rather than what they really want.

For a common example, people get obsessed by wanting money. Yet no one really wants a piece of paper that much. They want the freedom, the security that they believe the paper will bring them.

So often there are many routes to the same goal. Having money first, may be the hardest route, but because they have become fixated on that, they can't see the easier path to what they want and become frustrated.

Or perhaps they are unhappy in their relationship. They fixate on their Partner and believe he or she must meet every one of their needs. And so they get more and more obsessed about the things about them that they feel are missing or lacking or the thing they do that they hate.

Yet every person you meet has something that you could like about them and something that about them that you could find repulsive. There is not another person in the world now or ever that would tick every box to be the 'perfect Partner'.

What happens is that people get blinded to the things that attracted them to the person they are with. Or perhaps they needed certain attributes at one point in their life, like maybe they were insecure and wanted a strong, take charge person to take them out of a place where they're unhappy. But now they're in a different place, psychologically, they find the same 'Saviour' attributes restricting and 'controlling'.

So what is it you really want from this issue?

Step 2 – Brainstorm Possible Solutions

Brainstorm all the possible solutions that you can think of. There are always more than one solution. The number you can come up with is limited only by your thought structure. Most people have so many no-go areas in their mind that they don't explore many of the possible avenues. They say to themselves

'Oh. I couldn't think that. That's a bad thought.' 'No. I couldn't do that. That would be wrong.'

You have to open up and explore every possible avenue without any taboo issues or filtering going on. Later on you filter and evaluate the issues, but you have to look on all the possibilities before you can make a fair judgement.

Step 3 – Are You Ready To Decide?

Look at the possible solutions and see if any of these meet all your criteria. If they do and they feel right then you've finished your work. If not, then you can move through the following steps.

Step 4 – Find Who Has Already Solved Your Problem

Now you need to identify the sticking point. This is the the point where your solution won't work. Maybe it's because you believe you are not compatible with your Partner. Or perhaps you think that something has to be done in a certain way. Or possibly it's just that you don't think something is possible.

Yet every human problem has been solved somewhere by someone. So you just need to find someone who has solved a problem that you are looking to solve. Sometimes you have to be more creative. Somewhere someone has the same problem you have, but in a different form.

Maybe you believe that a relationship has to look a certain way. Yet if you looked around you'd find that relationships are almost as unique as the individuals in them.

For example, many industries are used to doing something in a certain way.

One case is Opticians. Traditionally you go into an Opticians, get your test and buy your glasses. But recently Opticians have been making a fuss because suddenly Customers have realized that they can go into the Optician's get their prescription and buy their glasses on-line and save money.

Many traditional retailers are suffering because suddenly people have realized that they can buy the same product, from someone on the Internet, who doesn't have the overhead of a shop, staff or all the running costs of a physical presence.

50 years ago if you were in the market for a Partner you were limited by the

people you bumped into and the people your friends might set you up with. But today, you can take your pick from thousands of people advertising on dating sites.

All of these are examples of how we can overcome our limits by changing our sense of what is possible. Here are some more examples of ideas of where to look for inspiration.

Back when I had a Health Club, I was looking for a way to help people stick to their exercise routines. So I looked at other people who needed to help people to stick to some kind of regime. I analysed drug rehabilitation programs, Alcoholics Anonymous, Loyalty card schemes for what had worked most effectively.

If you are having trouble to get people to buy into your corporate vision, look at brands that have loyal following, look at religions, cults, TV shows like Lost and Friends that have fervent fans and work out the processes why people identify with them so deeply.

The idea isn't to then copy their processes, but to gather possibilities so that you can find the best way for you.

The whole point of reading and observing is not to sit at the feet of some all knowing Guru, but to broaden your thinking of what is possible and stimulate yourself to a higher level of thinking. While you are limited by your own experiences and observations you cannot consider other solutions that may be easier and more effective simply because you can't see them.

No one else has the keys to what is right for you. It's not that their information is wrong, just that they may stand for different things and so their way may be right for them, but not right for you. We are not all here to live as robots, following some rules set in stone. Your role is to widen your sense of possibility and then select the one that best fits your sense of who you are.

Step 5 – Let The Issue Percolate Or Decide Now?

Have you now got any fresh ideas to resolve the issue?

If not then you have a choice to make. Are you going to resolve this now, knowing that maybe you are going to have to make an imperfect decision, but aren't they all? Almost all decisions can be improved at a later date, but isn't it a greater priority to live life now than, stagnate waiting for the perfect state of knowledge?

Even with that said though, there still are occasions when you just aren't ready to pull the trigger yet.

In that case, here's what you do. You hold the two opposing thoughts in your head and then completely unrelated contexts might stimulate a higher level of

thought for the two beliefs or options to co-exist.

Here's an example. I was exchanging views with a Reader. My understanding at that point was that the Ego was something that needed to be killed. She wrote back that the Ego did not need to be killed and that stimulated me to consider that why should violence be needed against the Ego and nowhere else. Yet I do not believe the Ego has any positive benefit.

So I had that niggling feeling that something needed upgrading in my thinking.

Also at the same point I noticed that all the people I was currently working with had the same essential issue even though it was in many varied forms. That issue was a lack of vision. Though not always a lack of vision, but a lack of clarity and ability to fully give themselves to that vision.

So I had these two niggles co-existing in my mind when I read something in an Abraham-Hicks book, talking about there only being one stream. They were saying there is not a light and dark switch, just a light switch. If it's on, it's light. If it's off it's dark.

Suddenly the three issues converged into an understanding that the Ego is a problem only while someone lacks or disconnects from their vision.

Whether you go through this process depends on how important it is to you and how tolerant you are of cognitive dissonance.

If it's not that important to you and/or you want a resolution now then you have to go to step 6.

Step 6 – Where Do I Stand In Relation To This Issue?

There are some issues where none of the following solutions will work. Maybe the solution is too far away from where you are for you to be able to access it for some time.

In this case, you've exhausted all other possibilities and you still can't find a way to meet all your criteria. So you just have to make a decision.

What the situation is, is a defining moment. Sometimes in life we have to make choices. Today all of us have more activities than we have time to do.

Too many possible things to do, than time to do it in. We all have more information than we can ever process. The reason why so many people are stressed so much of the time is that they feel that because they can do it, read it or be there that they should.

The key point in resolving stress is to understand that when you have too much to do... it means you have to prioritize and choose what you do. The way that you prioritize is by defining what your life is about and what you

stand for.

That you have two or more competing criteria to your issue means that you need to clarify and refine your sense of who you are and what you are about to a higher level.

This means digging deep into your sense of self and making a clear choice. Do I do this, yes or no? Which is more you? If you had to make a choice, which would you choose?

The art of living is really the art of choosing. The remaining posts in this series will be aimed at uncovering the dynamics that underlie making a decision.

Reader's Comments

Hi Rob,

"This millennium is about the birth of what a friend of mine has termed 'the given self'. It's not about willing or visualizing yourself to be what you think you should be. It's about understanding the pattern of instincts, experiences, observations and personality that make you what you are and then living truly to that self."

I am trying to understand the above lines and am struggling with it..

there is a gap between "what I want and what I think I am" and "what I actually am".. This GAP is very wide when I function from the level of the EGO and is significantly narrowed when I am more connected with the "True Self"

I would like to share with you my example..

1. What do I currently stand for

cool and efficient, interested in things that add value to myself and family, happy and healthy

2. What Do I like to Visualize myself to be standing for

Increasing Happiness & Health, Reducing Stress/Conflict, Able to add value in any situation.

3. What are the things/ideals that I value

I have rated them on a scale of 1-10 (1- less valuable, 10 very valuable)

Happiness -(10, 8) (how much I would ideally like to value, how much I actually value)

Health & Fitness - (8, 9)

Learning - (7, 8)

Justice - (8, 6)

Bodily pleasures (eating, sensuality) - (6, 9.5)

Engaged in Sport - (8, 8)

Peace of Mind - (9, 7)

Money - (6, 9.5)

Adding value to others (9, 4)

Adding value to family (10, 8)

Wisdom (10, 8)

Recognition from others (5, 9)

If I go with the pattern of instincts, observations and personality, then I do have to consider my patterns that I exhibit even when I am acting from the level of the ego and GAP between my ideal values and what I actually value is wide..

When I raise my level of consciousness, this GAP is narrow..

During the course of life, when you interact with people at various levels of connection with the spirit, my ego self takes over on many occasions..

back to the same question.. how do I establish and validate my values (what is more of me).. Does this have to come from the level of the spirit?

My Reply

It's not about pros and cons. That's the old way that someone makes a big decision. We're looking for a fresh new solution.

We haven't got up to making the decision yet. We're identifying the elements, the criteria that together will make up the big decision.

It's taking an issue apart into it's different cellular aspects. So it's not one decision based on pros and cons, but many little decisions.

For example, someone might tell you that they had Heart disease or Arthritis and unless you have medical training you'd probably feel satisfied you understood what was wrong with them.

But a Doctor would want a lot more information before he/she would treat them. There are over 300 different types of Arthritis and many forms of Heart disease. Is it the arteries, the heart function, the oxygenation and so on?

The label is a broad category, but different clusters of individual symptoms make up the condition. And the minute differences in symptoms lead to different diagnosis, prognosis and treatment.

In the same way, the problem is the overview, but there are clusters of beliefs, wants and fears underlying the problem.

Think of it this way.

If you travelled the world you'd find that an overwhelming number of the population fervently wanted world peace.

Go to the Christians and they would say; 'yes we want peace. If only everyone would live by God's law's as Jesus told them.'

Go to the Muslims and they would say; 'yes we want peace. If only everyone would live according to the law of Allah as Muhammad shared them.'

Go to the Buddhists and they would say; 'yes we want peace. If only everyone would live according to the laws as Buddha gave them.'

The problem isn't at the level of wanting peace, or love, or freedom. People believe they are fighting for peace or love or freedom. No one ever recruits an army by telling them they can go and kill all they can for fun. They appeal to their patriotism, their righteousness, their desire to protect their kin.

These wars originate in exactly the same thought processes as the individual problems we all face. The devil (or conflict) is in the details.

The problem is in the detail of how conflicting beliefs get to co-exist peacefully. The route out of them is not through choosing one over another, but in forging a new path. Using your unique situation to come to a new level of understanding and so creating a unique solution.

I want to know something, but I don't want to seem pushy is the impetus for a more evolved and refined means of communication.

This is the start of the decision stage. It is only designed to create a more refined goal. A set of criteria that you want met by the solution. We'll get to making an actual decision soon.

What Determines Whether You Can Resolve Stress?

Following on from the Zero Stress System, we are now looking at the dynamics underlying the making of a decision.

Every morning for the history of humanity, the sun has risen to illuminate the world. As it rises, it holds the promise of freshness. The uncertainty of a new day dawning. Yet as it reveals the world below, we see the same old structures and realize that this day will be much the same as the last.



[photo credit: joiseyshowaa](#)

Recently I received an email from someone expressing a fairly common reaction that she had no interest in life and was only waiting for her time to pass and return to a better world.

Many other people have expressed similar thoughts and there have been times when I could sympathise. Sometimes it just looks like life is set on a path that we don't want to be on and it seems too hard to change.

But the truth is, life just is.

The only difference between living in a physical world and in an afterlife is that people tend to limit their thoughts within a physical structure. They think what they see is the extent of what is possible and so if they can't see it, they doubt it's possible.

There are two forces that concern us in relation to this issue. The first is the force of life, like a river, just flowing freely where it can. What impedes life are our mental structures of set beliefs and prejudices.



[photo](#) credit: [me_suz](#)

None of us are new here to this planet. So obviously we are meeting with a history of experiences, observations and learning. Our heads have been filled with rules and regulations, from Parents, Peers, Teachers, Society generally and our own observations.

Yet none of these have ever had a broad enough understanding to really know how things are. Scientists are one example of a group of people who believe they can tell us Laws, only to then find their Law needs amending or abolishing when it is found to be flawed or incomplete. And these can be found in all fields, all cultures and all times. All we can ever have is a working understanding of life.

So we grasp onto these beliefs that help to bring us some sense of security and certainty in a world of chaos. But we do this at the cost of shrinking and limiting our sense of what is possible.

In our minds we have a structure built up, much as a city builds, with a mix of architecture from different times and sources. And it is this that dampens the enthusiasm of the new, with the belief in the old.



[Photo](#) credit: [photomequickbooth](#)

And it is the structure that is the source of all problems. Life flows freely, but it is the landscape of your mind that hems it into certain patterns that contradict rules and laws that you are certain are right.

In the natural unfolding of life these would not necessarily be a problem. However when they are framed by your belief that life has to show up in a certain form, then you have set the situation up so you view it in a certain light.

All problems stem not from the situation you are in, but from the way you are looking at the situation you are in. Which is why I so often say, you can be right or happy, but not both.

Next post will wrap up the Zero Stress System, with the factor that determines your inclination to choose being happy over being right.

I love the statement, you can be happy or you can be right. A marriage therapist I heard once said that understanding this was a requirement of a long happy marriage.

Regarding beliefs. I recently have gone through some pretty intense retrospection lasting close to a year. Following this idea of limiting beliefs, I spent a lot of time trying to determine where mine originated. I think I finally figured it out recently and can see the many ways it affected me in my early years. What made me more sure, was that those patterns of behaviour in my adult life followed very closely to those same beliefs I'd formed as a kid. I was able to see the connection very clearly for the first time in my life, where before it was impossible to figure out.

What has surprised me is that I always thought that when I finally figured out where my self limiting beliefs originated from, that I would at once be able to shed them like wet jacket. Then I would automatically lighten up and start enjoying life with a new set of eyes.

Either it takes a little more time than that or I'm still uncomfortable letting go of the old "me", because I still feel the old fears and the "not good enough" feelings inside.

I feel like my eyes are open now, but I'm trying to understand why it feels like I haven't changed my self perception that much.

To be clear, discovering what I've discovered has been very useful and I do feel more whole, just not the way I thought I would.

This all makes so much sense to me but as I think Brian is saying the knowing to doing seems to be very hard at times and letting go of things (in my case at this point in time my image of what a particular relationship could become) seems almost impossible at times. Where I am at with this is that maybe I don't need to let go of this image at all but just let it be in my mind as a possibility that may or may not materialise or even more likely might materialise in a way that I can't currently even imagine. My life is very full and I am certainly not unhappy. I identify with the statement Rob makes about the problems originating not from the situation we are in but in the way we are looking at that situation. It's good to talk to those who are thinking about similar things.

Thanks to everyone for being out there and sharing their thoughts.

This also depends on us human beings. Whatever we create in our inner thoughts produce what we get. When one keeps thinking, creating negative images in most cases this tends to be the end result, likewise, positive attitude, thinking produces happiness, success in one's life.

thanks for the effort on this.

Is It Overwhelming To Do?

Is it overwhelming to do all this for every issue?

Yes. But you don't need to do it most of the time. What I am laying out is the process for overcoming an issue. Maybe for a while you have to do this consciously for big issues, but as you do the process you lay down a neural pathway that makes it easier for each subsequent time. So after a while it becomes an automatic response that you do without even realising it. But of course like anything, there is a learning curve.

Will you be overwhelmed by doing it in little chunks? Maybe. If you can deal with it one big chunk, then do it in one big chunk.

But the idea behind the small chunks is that it makes a big decision more manageable. In most cases people are stuck on making a decision because there are many other things they know are involved in the decision, but they can't think of them all at the same time. So making small decisions is easier.

It all depends on what's right for you. Stephen Hawking can calculate all his workings out in his head because that's the way his brain has become structured. But his Peers need boards and papers to map out their thoughts. It just depends on what works best for you.

I'm not big on following processes and recipes. I don't think life is about consciously following templates. I think you have to understand the basic process and then develop and refine it with your own individual stamp. So what I have done is analyse how issues are successfully dealt with and then broken the process down to detailed steps for you to digest and then develop your own way of working with them. It's just a starting point so you have something to work with.

Which issues to tackle?

All of them. If they are on your mind, process them so they move from your mind to resolved and forgotten.

You're right that most of them will come to nothing. Over time all stress passes. It passes because the issue no longer becomes a big deal or because you change your perspective, beliefs and definitions that make it no longer relevant to you. Or it will become so urgent that it becomes a priority to deal with it. Emergencies are almost always only little things that blew up to crisis level.

This process is about manipulating what naturally happens, so that you can make it happen faster.

Most of the time in life you'll be off-balance. This is all about getting back to a calmer, clearer state quicker. Prolonged stress is costly, any way you measure it. If you were only to look at it in terms of physical health, stress only starts to damage you, once it starts depleting your body. The release of adrenalin that activates the 'fight or flight' response is a normal state. But it's when that state is maintained for a prolonged period that Cortisol is released and the body begins to destroy itself to fuel the readiness to act, that stress starts taking a toll on your health.

Again it depends on how much tolerance you have for drama and internal conflict and confusion in your life. I have very little. I like calmness, peace and stability. I have great enthusiasm and passion for what I do. I already have more plans than I will ever have time to complete. Many people need great dramas to motivate them into action and give them a focus for action.

The key is not to sit there with your pen and paper ready permanently processing, but to get to zero stress and then catch issues as they crop up. As you get better and better at doing this, you can do it quicker and more easily. What holds people up is wanting perfection on every issue. You can't get that, you just have to either make a decision or put it aside to make a decision at a specific time.

voice keeps telling me that we are missing something..

I think we are, but this is only a first draft. It's the best I could come up with to explain this now. The key question for all of us, is what's missing in this model?

What would make it smoother and easier for us all to implement in our lives?

Reader's Comments

I believe what you have stated is a spiritual truth. In fact at this very moment the fight or flight response is in command. My committee of voices (lol) are telling me that I have gotten into something that is hurting me and I better figure out how to stop the pain as it is causing damage to ones spiritual and physical essence.

Blame others? Running away? Freezing? Which one am I into at the moment? Hum Freezing because a frozen heart cannot feel the pain. Okay now what? Oh how I would love to shout to the roof tops with anger. Victim or love? Can I embrace my humanity and that of others? Maybe with God's help. Maybe I'll find love. Yes I am in pain at the moment but then...this too shall pass.

"The well of love refills itself, The more one gives of love, the more one has to give." Lois

My Reply

I've always liked the phrase 'this too shall pass.' I just like to work out what has to happen before it will pass, so it will pass quicker.

I am trying to understand the subtleties of how stress builds up..I am thinking as I am writing and so pls excuse me for the lack of structure in this post..

generally, when we are in deep dreamless sleep, there is perfect peace and we are at at zero stress base.

let us leave the dreaming state aside for the moment..

the moment we wake up,we are conscious of something or other.. our attention and awareness is focussed on something or diffused..

thoughts and feelings keep arising in us which swings our attention..

so what is real relaxation? when are we stressed and when are we relaxed?

for g, there are several things going on in my head at the moment. it is 4.00 Am and I just woke up..I want to get clarity and vision of how and what it would feel like to live with zero base stress, my daughter could wake up any time and cry for milk and I have to attend to her, I have a few open issues at office, but those are not troubling me at the moment.

what I have noticed in me is that I have started to feel a slight discomfort when I have nothing to do..on both Saturday and Sunday I was pretty happy to wake up early, read, exercise, play with my kids, coach a couple of clients.. when I got sometime without anything particular to do, I felt uncomfortable to simply watch TV..instead I wanted to meditate and I did..

it sounds good right? I also feel good about it, but this led me to the question that work or play s inherently stressful or not?I had the false notion that the more time you spend working the more stress builds up..that dos not seem to be true..when I am engaged in activities that are more of me, hen there is no stress. only when I am engaged in activities that are not in line with my vision and is n contradiction to my sense of self, it creates stress..

this leads me to another question that I have in my mind.. I see that my elder daughter is only 7 years old and she is involved in many activities..she has school for about 6 hours a day (8-2 pm), she is learning swimming, abacus, dance, chess and squash.. on top of this she spends 1.5 hours in the play ground (unstructured play time)

I see her quite busy.. I ma asking myself "is she stressed?". is it too much for a 7 year old? she looks cheerful and normal..

I have also seen the same pattern in her as I noticed in myself.. she would not know what to do when she has nothing to do.. she would simply watch TV..

since I have no way of measuring or knowing her stress levels, is there a way to know

1. what causes stress in children?
2. what are the symptoms?

3. all the activities that I mentioned above (school, squash , chess, dance, swim, abacus) helps her to structure her time and attention.. she has expressed interest in these and has willingly taken these up..

I am just concerned whether it is too much..

if I imagine myself to have so many activities where I have to learn many new skills, concentrate and focus, where there would be some demands on performance.. you need to do some practice..there would e others doing better and this would result in some kind of comparison..

just wondering ho kids cope, or how silently stress builds up..

My Reply

I have a saying that I used talking to my children, that kids are adults in training. Unfortunately, so are most of us too!

What I mean is that they look around the world and try out things to come to work out what it's all about and where they fit in to it all.

So often children will have many diverse interests. There are no rules. We can have no hard and fast set guides or dictates. Those that we try to set always end up being wrong sooner or later.

We all react and interpret differently and cannot understand how another person really feels. You and your Daughter are in very different places in your journeys.

She is exploring lots of topics to find herself, whereas you have an idea of what you want and are looking for a refined level of focus.

I think the only thing that can tell us if something is right or wrong is the Individual concerned. If your Daughter enjoys these things and is eager to do them then I'm sure it's not causing her any stress.

You are getting to understand the nature of stress now. It is not being busy that causes stress, but the distance between your vision or your ideal sense of self and the reality you live.

You will always be happier being engaged in something that means something to you that stretches you than you will being idle.

We are only idle either because we need a rest to recharge or because we have nothing better to do.