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## Stress Awareness

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It's well worth the effort to raise your level of stress awareness. There are physical health benefits; there are emotional health benefits; there are improvements of life experience benefits to having constant honest stress awareness.

As with all things in life, balance is essential to wellbeing. Stress, in and of itself, is not inherently a bad thing. Too much or even too little stress, however, invariably results in destructive consequences. There are certain benefits to periodic, gentle to moderate levels of stress. Anyone who has ever done any physical training will be very familiar with this idea. Both physical endurance and muscle are built through stress. By regularly, but intermittently, stressing your body just a bit beyond its comfort zone you increase your physical capacity. To build endurance you use aerobic stressors. To build muscle you use resistance stressors. These stresses force your body to adapt to more efficiently meet the new challenges and new demands it finds itself faced with. But in order to actually gain the benefits brought on by the stress of exercise, every experience of physical stress must be followed by a period of rest. This is the balance. Without rest your body becomes overworked and rundown, and then injuries result. On the other hand, without a modest level of stress your body grows sluggish and obese, and then disease results. Balance is the key. Maintaining this equilibrium is just as vital with emotional stress, which is why stress awareness is so important. Just as it takes mindful diligence to athletically condition your body, it takes great attentiveness to condition an enjoyable life experience for yourself. It's to your every advantage to be emotionally stress aware.

So let's start with the basics. Where does emotional stress come from? The answer: your thoughts. Every thought you have falls somewhere along the spectrum of feeling extremely distressing to feeling extremely relaxing. The more your thoughts are at variance with Spirit, the more distressing its energy will feel. The more your thoughts are in sync with Spirit, the more peaceful it will feel. Again, the fact that a thought feels stressful is not in and of itself a terrible thing. That uncomfortable feeling you experience when thinking stressful thoughts serves to indicate to you that this is a thought which is inconsistent with your Inner Being.

The more distressing a thought is the more physically tense you will become. The pathways in your body grow constricted, your heart beats faster, your blood pressure elevates and your system is flooded with hormones which work to give you a physical edge. Such a state is meant to be temporary, not constant. And if the mental stress which incites this state is not before long let go of it will disrupt the flow which moves energy and nourishment throughout your body and illness will be the eventual result.

But it takes quite some doing to get this far gone. It's not the stress, per se, that causes this imbalance. It's what you do in the face of such distress that determines whether you will grow unwell from this experience or whether you will simply grow.

What all too often happens with mental stress is that we tend to hold onto it. We may temporarily succeed in taking our mind off of a thought that stirs unrest in us, but we seldomly truly release it. We simply ignore such thoughts which does nothing to diffuse their impact on us. For as long as we hold on to any disturbing thought, its effect will continue to impact our physical body keeping us in a sustained state of disquiet. This problem is then compounded by our refusal to also face up to the new mental stresses which arise in our experience. We allow them to build up and build up until we become so riddled with anxiety we're practically in knots because we refuse to deal. We shut down. We make ourselves purposefully unaware about the thoughts that cause us discomfort. We try to shove them to the back of our mind which can (at first) seem like an effective solution to dealing with them. Out of sight, out of mind right? Well, no.

The thoughts you think give rise to feelings. And the feelings you experience are what essentially shape your life experience. So thoughts are a very powerful thing. They are the very foundation of the world you have created for yourself. And there's a difference between (temporarily) taking your mind off of a thought and actually accepting a different thought (which amounts to introducing a whole new tone to your life experience). When you simply take your mind off of a thought, you do feel the energy associated with that thought less intensely because you are no longer empowering it with your attention. (You always feel most intensely whatever thought you are presently focused on which is why distracting yourself from the thoughts which cause you distress does feel somewhat relieving.) However, moving your attention away from a thought is not the same as actually releasing that thought. And until you actually release that distressing thought, it will stay with you. That thought and the energy associated with that thought continues to impact your life experience until you decide to release it. For you have the ability to maintain your hold on a thought even if you are not directly thinking about it. We call these types of thoughts your beliefs. They are the thoughts you have extended your acceptance to and in so doing have formed a bond with. This bond is like a magnet. It allows you to carry around with you certain choice ideas and perceptions throughout a leg of your life's journey until such time as you decide to give them up for something new. You want to change your experience in life - you have to change your thoughts. You want to change your thoughts - you have to have an honest awareness about them. You shouldn't ignore a thought simply because it makes you feel uncomfortable. It's to your benefit to not only maintain stress awareness, but to confront those thoughts which you find stressful. Face them head on. Don't try to hide them, or bury them, or distract yourself from them. But stand in the center of them until such time as you can truly bring yourself to let them go. You will grow mental stronger and wiser by this action.

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