

Manage the Stressors and Enjoy Your Holidays

By Laura Silva Quesada

The Holiday Season, for many, can be very stressful. When you experience any kind of stress, no matter what the occasion, you are reacting to some stimulus. Ask yourself the following questions:

What am I truly experiencing inside - In Spirit, Mind, Body and especially Emotions?

Am I angry about something not going a certain way or someone not doing or behaving a certain way?

Am I afraid of an imagined outcome?

Is it a control issue over a person, place, thing, or outcome that is stressing me?

Am I stressed about gift giving and the extra expense I will incur on a strained budget?

Am I stretching my self too thin and running my self ragged doing too much and trying to please everyone?

What can I do at this very moment, NOW, in order to make this Holiday Season a great one?

Being entirely honest with oneself is a good exercise.

Sigmund Freud

The most common causes that lead to stress have to do with the following core issues:

Abandonment – Depression and sadness during the Holidays is something that is more common than we would like to believe. To be alone during the holidays because of a death, divorce, or distance can be very stressful and emotionally painful. One of the best ways to overcome the results of abandonment is to meditate on your own wonderful qualities, skills and talents and the many

things you have to offer to so many. You might also want to meditate on how to improve the areas you believe need improving and make improving those areas goals for the New Year. Offer your skills and talents to a neighbor, the elderly, those who are ill, or in need. Whenever you extend your hand in order to help others, you will be helping yourself as well. Every time you extend yourself to someone in need you will be blessed by his or her gratitude and joy. This alone is worth living for, and will bring great happiness during this season of giving.

Rejection – To be denied love, acceptance, and care during the holidays from those whom you want it the most is stressful. If you are living or working under these circumstances you may need to reevaluate the reasons why you are still there. It could be that your Self-Worth, Self-Esteem and Self-Image may come into question. Why do you stay? Is it that you believe it is better to live with people who reject you than to live alone? Do you believe this is the best you can get? Your Self-Worth and Self-Esteem are Beliefs you have about yourself and those beliefs design your Self-Image. Check your Beliefs about yourself and what you deserve in life. Do they work for you or against you? What you believe is a result of your all your past experiences and relationships. Go within and Meditate on any past experience or relationship that you believe resulted in the lowering of your Self-Worth and Self-Esteem, and mentally CHANGE IT into something more positive and empowering! Mentally bring the changes with you into your present and then imagine the changes playing a positive role in your future. Begin to live AS IF you now have a great Self-Image due to a very high Self-Worth and Self-Esteem. Start with loving, accepting and caring for you first, and others will follow.

"You can change your beliefs so they empower your dreams and desires. Create a strong belief in yourself and what you want."

Marcia Wieder

Hopelessness – To live with situations that cause despair, or are impossible to solve, or cure can lead to stress. Every time you think of those things that lead to hopelessness, immediately STOP and instead think and project positive thoughts and images to those involved, the Universe, and/or God. The very least you can do about situations you feel hopeless in is to imagine the best possible outcome for all those involved. Meditate daily on those positive outcomes and know that you are doing what you can in order to make it better.

"We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope."

Martin Luther King Jr.

Helplessness – To be/feel weak, incompetent, powerless also leads to stress. There are many situations where a person is helpless because of size, strength, resources, conditions and/or consequences. Yet, in many of those situations, acquiring the proper resources such as skills, talents, quick thinking, education and intuition will empower you in a way that will allow you make better choices and decisions. This will help you overcome the feeling of helplessness. Unless you are using being/feeling helpless for some personal gain, it is usually something you can eliminate.

Control – One of the greatest stressors is the need to have control over everything. This is often true during the Holiday Season. Having to get the perfect gift for everyone on your list; wear the perfect outfit for an evening out; throw the perfect party, and have everyone behave a certain way are just a few of the demands we make on ourselves and others that are impossible to meet all of the time. These type of addictions to having to have everything under your control, demands and expectations are not always satisfied, and when they aren't it makes us angry. Anger often results from not being able to control everything, and fear is the result of not knowing how things, out of your control, will turn out. It's about time to let go. Make your plans, and whatever happens after that will generally turn out just fine. Accept people, especially those you love, for who and how they are. You cannot control everyone all the time and why should you, or even want to? Why do you want

to be with someone you feel you need to change, or control? Accepting people for whom and how they are and seeing the beauty in them when they are being themselves freely, opens the door for them to see you in the same light.

When a core issue is being triggered, the mere fact that it is being triggered means that it is something that is related to some aspect of your past. For example, when was the first time you felt abandoned? The answer could lie in something as simple as your parents going out to dinner and leaving you behind, or as serious as being left in front of someone's doorstep as an infant. The reality is, you might not even remember the actual past event, and yet the experience of abandonment was so deeply impressed that it resulted in an issue that is still being triggered today.

When was the first time you felt rejected? Someone could have praised your sibling, and not you. Maybe you were passed up at school and not picked to play in a sports team, or the only one in your class not to be invited to a party.

When did you first experience the feeling of hopelessness? Something like wanting the latest bike for your birthday, but your family not having the money to buy it for you could have led to a feeling of hopelessness. Wanting to try out for a certain sport, but you have a physical handicap can also lead to hopelessness.

When did you first experience the feeling of helplessness? For some people, them having been physically overpowered by someone much bigger than they could have led to a feeling helplessness. Seeing someone you know suffer and not being able to help them can also lead to helplessness.

When did you first experience the feeling of frustration for not getting your way or having full control over a situation? Being made to go to your room as a punishment from a parent makes a child feel that they have no control. Being told how to think, speak, believe, and behave could lead to a feeling of not being in control. In time this could also lead to a strong desire to want to control others and situations.

The point of the matter is that these emotions have to do with your past and can cause plenty of stress. They were impressed when you were probably very young and did not have the necessary resources to handle them. Today you may feel that you are all grown up physically, intellectually, spiritually and

emotionally, but the moment you are face to face with a trigger, the snowball effect begins. First, you experience the shift from comfort to stress with a knotted feeling in the pit of your stomach; then your mind begins to fill with sabotaging thoughts and negative feelings linked to issues of your past; followed by the cluster of physical changes due to the triggering of the Fight or Flight Response; and then the expression of the stress itself in the form of a reaction that resembles a “Child” who is angry, afraid or hurt.

Get a grip on stress. The moment you begin to feel that you are shifting towards stress or are aware of the stress, do the following:

1. Stop, close your eyes, take a deep breath, exhale, and tell yourself mentally “Relax” and get in control. Do this 1, 2, or 3 times.

Counting from 10 – 1 slowly also helps to manage stress helping to avoid undesirable outcomes.

2. Identify the core issue being triggered and identify whether it makes you angry, afraid or both.

Recognize that those feelings are part of unresolved past issues and are spilling over to the present.

"An agitated mind can never find the answers which belong to a settled and quiet mind."

Vernon Howard

3. Separate yourself from that “past you” (Un-resourceful child). Allow the “Adult You” to handle the situation resourcefully, fairly, and appropriately.

Don't let anger, fear, insecurities, exhaustion, negative feelings and control issues get in the way of having a wonderful Holiday Season. You are in control of just you. This means you are in control of your thoughts, beliefs and behaviors. Let them work for you this Holiday Season. Enjoy!