

SOS

Sensing Ones Sensations

Transcending Distress

Each of us has a mechanism for coping with stress. Yet, few of us know how to digest and transcend the energy that has been bound up into symptoms due to traumatic stress. It is in your best interest to identify your method of handling stress and to evaluate its overall effectiveness. Many methods can do you more harm than good.

In general, the most common stressors today are not enough time or money, job and career pressures, relationship problems, parenting obligations, commuting in traffic. The most used remedies are:

...Hurry up, do more, eat fast food (or, eat food fast), drive faster, drink coffee, work harder, stay up later, yell and scream, demand other's do something for you, take drugs (prescription or non-prescription), drink alcohol to relax and/or socialize, watch TV to unwind, surf the Internet, smoke cigarettes, use sex for relief, and on it goes.

Unfortunately, the most common means of dealing with stress are not transcending stress they are stress inducing or transforming at best. And so, the stress escalates until we are exhausted, and our bodies drained of their vital energies.

In addition to these gross generalizations we know that stress can be caused by nutritional, environmental, chemical, physical, hereditary/family factors and any stimulus can cause stress, which is negatively perceived.

Most of us spend our lives either in *denial or resistance to the stress and the stressors, becoming exhausted by resisting and denying the stress and its origins*. When the phase of stress exhaustion sets in there is usually an accompanying symptomatic disease and *perhaps*, ultimately death. *Stress is a killer*. In order to manage the distress-induced disease it becomes imperative to interrupt the process as close to the origin of the disease as possible. *Regarding traumatic stress, its epicenter is at the initial alarm reaction phase of the stress response related to the threat and its elements. That includes the context as well as the contents*. Usually, this ranges from a general unease to a *full-on shock response to a given situation*.

The alarm reaction phase is an *intrinsic and basic hereditary survival mechanism of your body and brain*. Your fight, flight and freeze defensive orienting responses have been designed and perfected over the course of humankind. Genetically, we are the sons and daughters of those of our ancestors *who adapted to life threatening events and thanks to them each of us now have a finely tuned system that provides adaptation responses far in excess of the relatively "mild" threats to our immediate survival*. We no longer must defend ourselves

against saber tooth tigers. Yet, our present challenge is to adapt to our modern threats where the predator is rarely noticed. This lag in our evolutionary adaptive capacity is presently killing off those who cannot transcend the energy of their alarm reactions, *the arousal of intense biochemical survival energies*. Those most fitting to adapt and transcend are those who can *transmute, the nourishment of experience and discharge the toxic distress of their life encounters whether stressors of trauma or neglect*.

The manner in which our ancestors fended against predators natural disasters and each other is vastly different from the way we need to defend ourselves in rush hour traffic, keeping our jobs, providing an income, investing in our children's future, and more subtle threats, as well. However, the threats are still disturbing and distressing. Present-day problems do affect our survival mechanisms and place our bodies in a constant state of alarm, yet they can be subtle to our conscious mind, such as noise pollution, air pollution. Your mind might say, I'm OK. But your body might say otherwise. Not locating a threat is a far greater obstacle to your survival than your mind is willing to admit. Your mind plays tricks on you while your body senses the threat. Remember, it is your body that tells it like it is. Wouldn't it be wise to listen and be receptive to what you sense, and to acknowledge what you know? This is the skill that the most fitting of our kind has used for eons to survive and transcend the traumas and distress that exist about them.

The need to be aware of the qualities and the stressors that are in one's life, and to actively transcend these, to a state of well-being occurs through attending, perceiving what is happening now. The stressors are not as easily seen as a saber-toothed tiger. For example, a near or actual car accident can and does create a stress response. Your divorce, a job loss, a bereavement, any negative stimulus can create a stress response which may involve over 1,400 physiochemical changes, which may be activated to varying degrees. All these changes can act in a set involuntary pattern of our nervous system to heal. Unfortunately, the all clear signal may be volunteered way too early by a programmed mindset that says, "I don't have time to handle this now. I'll deal with it later." Thus, suppressing the healing mechanism. Truncating it, abbreviating the healing.

Our stress responses, though not produced by a saber-toothed tiger, are not necessarily less shocking. Also, the sheer number of stressors in modern life often precludes an effective return to a basic level of healthy functioning, even after minor irritations. When the accumulated mass of traumas and unresolved stress weigh you down, you may be entering into a second phase of stress. The low-resistant and non-resilient phase, wherein your body is progressively sapped of its adaptive energy. You may get more colds and flu, bacterial infections, fatigue, and minor aches and pains. These are some of the physical symptoms of the bound energy that has not been released from your body.

What can you do to transcend distress, and ready yourself to meet the challenges that life brings?

Recognize early the signs of distress. Take time each day to feel and sense your body. Notice the location of tension in your body tissues, including muscles, joints, anywhere and everywhere. Request a gradual release of that tension. Allow yourself to sense and feel tension being released. Sense your heart beating, hear it, feel it pulsating touching the fluids in the pericardium and pushing blood through your arteries. If you don't sense your heart. Stop breathing and focus on your heart. You will soon sense it! Allow a knowing of what a healthy pace is for your heart. Sense these sensations, these images. Also, you can breathe rhythmically, sensing the same amount of air being inhaled as exhaled. Not forcing this, just sensing and knowing this. Letting the air breathe you. Feel and know the sense of this rhythm, in your body, in your mind. Counting will only lock-in the beta brain wave function, allow a settling into theta.

Empower yourself by enriching your life. Make a list of the things that you enjoy doing, the people or animals that you enjoy being with and those activities that you are passionate about. Then, take one of those items from your list, get in a quiet and cozy position and allow yourself to image doing this, being with those you enjoy and listening, touching, seeing, tasting and smelling these enjoyments as these images rise and expand. Allow a minimum of 10 minutes. Just feeling and savoring your sensations.

Cultivate a low arousal response. Identify one stressor just **a little one**. Then, allow yourself to feel the healing rhythms, of your life spreading, heart beating, lungs breathing. Then, allow the image of a hand mirror to be felt in your hand, see it, sense it. Now use that mirror to locate in the distance from you, the little stressor. As you do this notice your body's response to that little stressor. Observe any differences between the rhythm of your life and your responses. Know and feel the differences. And now feel your rhythms as you look about your present environment and set the mirror down knowing you can pick it up and use it to notice and know the difference between the rhythms and stressors of your life.

Rework your harmful remedies. If you know it is true that your body does not lie, learn from it. Listen to it. Sense it. Feel the sensations of your body as messages to take action to supplement your present methods of handling stress. Also, act upon those items that you enjoy doing, from the list that you made above. Your body is a tool of integration and knows you intimately.

Empower it! Enrich it! Enjoy it!