

An Enhanced Quality of Life

The purpose of today's article, the last in our series, is to find new ways of improving and enhancing our quality of life as we grow older. After reading, you will have a greater familiarity with strategies for maintaining a healthy lifestyle; increased awareness of our personal "stress triggers"; and heightened awareness of our personal values and how they influence the way we think and act.



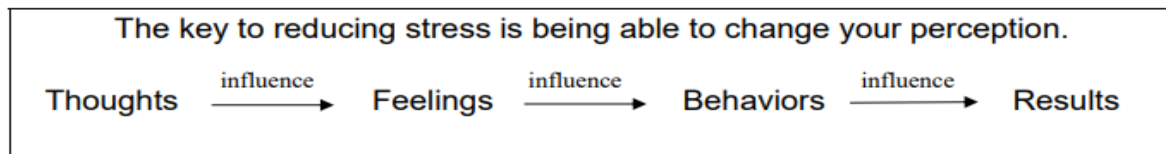
The body experiences stress as it tries to adapt to an ever-changing environment. A little stress keeps us alert and helps us to problem-solve. Too much stress, however, can lead to a host of physical and psychological problems. Often, just having someone listen can help eliminate stress. The first step towards reducing or eliminating stress is being able to identify your stress triggers—the little (or big) things in life that can make you crazy. To identify your triggers, complete the following sentences:

"One thing that really stresses me out is....."

"I can tell I'm feeling stressed when....."

Sometimes we live with stress, and we never take the time to actually identify what is causing it. Sometimes we have gotten so used to stress, we no longer consciously recognize it – but our body does and will let us know – if we listen.

TIPS FOR REDUCING STRESS



What You Can Do:

- ✓ Identify the triggers; avoid them whenever possible; plan ahead how you'll deal with them
- ✓ Prioritize
- ✓ Create a balance between work and play
- ✓ Develop a positive attitude (instead of "I can't" think "How can I?")
- ✓ Refrain from blame
- ✓ Welcome challenges and obstacles as opportunities for growth
- ✓ Develop communication skills and assertiveness techniques
- ✓ Learn effective conflict resolution strategies
- ✓ Be flexible
- ✓ Take care of your needs: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual
- ✓ Learn to say "no"
- ✓ Practice the four S's:

- ✓ See things differently
- ✓ Slow down
- ✓ Simplify
- ✓ Be silly and play

TRUE VALUE

Your values are your ideas about what is most important to you—what you want to live by and live for. They are the silent forces behind many of your actions and decisions. The goal of “values clarification” is for their influence to become fully conscious and for you to explore and honestly acknowledge what you truly value at this time in your life. You can be more self-directed and effective when you know which values you choose to keep and live by as an adult and which ones will get priority over others.



TRUE VALUES

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Making a contribution to the world | <input type="checkbox"/> Being with people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fighting injustice | <input type="checkbox"/> Being loved |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living ethically | <input type="checkbox"/> Being married |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being a good parent (or child) | <input type="checkbox"/> Having a special partner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being a spiritual person | <input type="checkbox"/> Having companionship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having a relationship with God | <input type="checkbox"/> Loving someone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having peace and quiet | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking care of others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Making a home | <input type="checkbox"/> Having someone's help |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preserving your roots | <input type="checkbox"/> Having a close family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having financial security | <input type="checkbox"/> Having good friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Holding on to what you have | <input type="checkbox"/> Being liked |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being safe physically | <input type="checkbox"/> Being popular |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being free from pain | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting people's approval |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not being taken advantage of | <input type="checkbox"/> Being appreciated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having it easy | <input type="checkbox"/> Being treated fairly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being comfortable | <input type="checkbox"/> Being admired |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding boredom | <input type="checkbox"/> Being independent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having fun | <input type="checkbox"/> Being courageous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoying sensual pleasures | <input type="checkbox"/> Having things in control |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Looking good | <input type="checkbox"/> Having self-control |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being physically fit | <input type="checkbox"/> Being emotionally stable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being healthy | <input type="checkbox"/> Having self-acceptance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having prized possessions | <input type="checkbox"/> Having pride or dignity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being a creative person | <input type="checkbox"/> Being well-organized |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having deep feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> Being competent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Growing as a person | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning and knowing a lot |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living fully | <input type="checkbox"/> Achieving highly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> “Smelling the roses” | <input type="checkbox"/> Being productively busy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having a purpose | <input type="checkbox"/> Having enjoyable work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having an important position | <input type="checkbox"/> Striving for perfection |

Are your values different than they were say, 30 years ago? It is important for us to take stock of our current values and to work towards living in a way that supports those values.

Our quality of life can improve when we can minimize our stress and learn to cope with the stress we do experience because life can be messy, painful and even scary at times, no matter what we do. But to feel that we are more in control than “out of control”, to understand our values that should be driving our decisions, and to make healthy decisions all lead to a better quality of life. Isn't that what we all want?

Thank you for taking the time to read these six articles. We hope you have found these to be beneficial. If you have missed any of the prior articles or want more information, please visit our WISE resource page at www.ourplaceinc.org/programs/detail/wellness-for-senior-education.

If you do visit the resource page, you will receive a gift bag courtesy of Our Place and the Indiana Division of Mental Health and Addictions.

This article is adapted from the New Jersey Prevention Network's Wellness Initiative for Senior Education prevention program.