

Unwind **online**

OCTOBER 2018

This newsletter is for you if you'd like to better manage stress, gain greater efficiency, and improve life balance. In it you'll find tips and tools designed to empower, refresh, and renew you. Here's to all of us living a more fulfilled life.

Ann Wildz

Stress Talk: Q & A

Before you can learn to better manage stress you'll need a basic understanding of just what stress is. So, let's take a look at four common stress related questions.

What exactly is stress? Stress is the physiological and psychological responses to a triggering event that prepares your body for action. It's made up of three parts: an event or experience (a stressor), a mental assessment of risk (your belief—conscious or unconscious—about the stressor), and a slew of bodily reactions preparing you to respond (called the general adaptation syndrome).

Is stress bad? Stress is neither good nor bad. It's your perception that makes it one or the other.

Can stress be eliminated? Stress is a necessary component for life. Without some level of stress your mind and body wouldn't perform. For example, your body is under stress when you perform basic life tasks such as walking, eating, and breathing. It's stress that helps you meet everyday life challenges, accomplish goals, complete tasks, and keeps you safe.

How can I deal with negative stress? The best way to manage unwanted stress is to create a personal stress management toolbox that you fill with tips, techniques and tools to use whenever you come under negative stress. Each newsletter edition will provide you with a few to store in your toolbox. Some will help you control your stressors, others will teach you how to reframe your perspective or train your thoughts, and still others will show how to manage your physical responses. The more frequently you apply them the less often stress will have a negative effect on your life.

How to Find Margin

Each day has exactly 24 hours, yet some people accomplish more in that time than the rest of us. They aren't the most educated, the most talented, or even the smartest, but they have a secret weapon that helps them outperform their peers. It's not a time machine, but a consistent plan to use their time. Even in the most unstructured environments, they've crafted a daily plan for their particular set of circumstances and consistently work it. If you'd like more efficiency in your day, consider applying some of their common techniques.

- **Identify & eliminate time wasters-** If you don't already know yours, track your time on an average day. You may be surprised how much time is wasted.
- **Eat the frog-** Do the most challenging or unpleasant task first. That way it won't hang over your head the rest of the day.
- **Establish a Top3 or Top5 daily task list-** You'll avoid missing critical items.
- **Use Time Blocking-** Schedule the day by action type. (Ex. 8-10 make phone calls, 10-10:30 work email)
- **Protect your time-** Limit social media, texting, internet, & chatting to breaks, lunch, or home.
- **Work in Intervals-** Work intensely in timed intervals interspersed with short breaks.
- **Brain dump-** Make a quick list of your thoughts each morning to allow your mind to focus on the task at hand.

Contentment is not a destination, it's a manner of traveling.

The Power of 3: Getting Calm & Centered

Do you ever experience times where you feel completely overwhelmed? If so, you're not alone. Most everyone feels that way from time to time. Life is fraught with pressure, we have overfilled plates and juggle multiple balls, so it's not surprising when we find our minds racing and our emotions overloaded. So, what do you do when it happens?

Blowing up at someone will let off steam but it will harm them, and it's not good for you. Neither is shutting down. But there are a number of healthy tools at your disposal. One of my personal favorites I call the Power of 3.

If at all possible, go someplace where you can be alone. I prefer going outdoors but even the bathroom will do. Start by taking 3 deep breaths. Next, say (either out loud or to yourself):

- I see (name something you see)
- I hear (name a sound you hear)
- I feel (name a physical sensation you feel)
- Repeat the series two additional times for a total of 3. Each time naming something different that you see, hear, and feel.
- Don't rush through the steps

It's a simple technique, that even children can use, but a powerful one. It gets you out of your head and fully into the moment, which in turn lowers your heart rate, calms your mind, and centers your spirit.

Watch Out for ANTs

Ants are little things, but they cause a lot of disruption when they show up uninvited. Mental ANTs, automatic negative thoughts, are much the same.

Your thoughts control your feelings about yourself and the world around you. Yet, often they come so quickly they go unnoticed. What you notice is their effect on your emotions. These types of thoughts are called automatic thoughts and they're typically negative or irrational in nature.

You can realign your mood by identifying and replacing ANTs with balanced thoughts. As with any other skill, you will need practice to be able to do so with ease.

The next time you notice a shift in your emotions, look around for ANTs. If you find some, the process below will help you stamp them out.

Trigger event= You made a mistake at work.

ANT= *That's it! I'm not good at this job. I always mess up. I'm probably going to be fired.*

Emotional shift=frustration, fear, shame

- **Identify**=Notice your feeling. Now ask, what am I thinking?
- **Evidence**=Is this thought really true in this moment?
- **Replacement Thought**= *I messed up, but mistakes happen. I'm going to work through this like always.*

Attitude of Gratitude

Negativity has no benefit. It depletes your energy and poison relationships, but unfortunately it's a disease that's easy to catch. A good way to ward it off, while also lowering your stress response, is to adopt an attitude of gratitude.

Keeping a gratitude journal or a short list of things you're grateful for in clear view is an easy way to help keep focused on gratefulness. But if you're stuck in a funk it might be hard to get started.

If so, perhaps these facts will help shift your thinking.

- If you can read this, you're more fortunate than the 1.3 billion illiterate people in the world.
- If you have food in your pantry, clothes in your closet and a roof over your head, you're more fortunate than 75% of the people in the world.
- If you have a savings account, no matter how small, you're more fortunate than nearly 6 billion people in the world.
- If you can worship- or not- as you please, without fear of harassment, imprisonment or death, you're more fortunate than 3 billion people in the world.

When you go through the day with a grateful heart you set your mind for positivity. And it's only there that growth can occur.