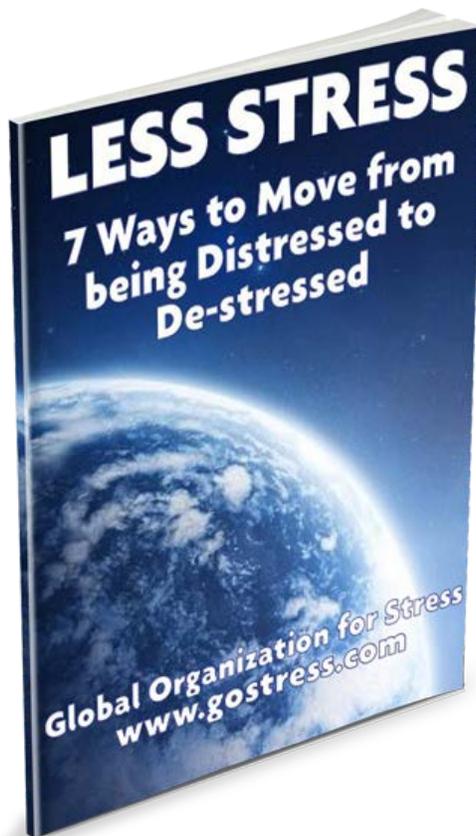


LESS STRESS

(STRESS LESS)

**Seven Steps to Move from Being
Distressed to De-stressed**

Workshop Presentation with Dr Judy Esmond



GLOBAL ORGANIZATION FOR STRESS

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome and thank you for joining me today. My name is Dr Judy Esmond. Now, please join me for a live presentation of 'Stressless - Seven Steps to move from being Distressed to De-stressed'.

(LESS STRESS) STRESS LESS: 7 STEPS TO MOVE FROM BEING DISTRESSED TO DE-STRESSED

Stress and Fight or Flight

Okay, hands up anyone in the room who has ever felt stressed. Well, just about everybody. Well, you are certainly in the right place for the workshop today. In fact, since the 1940's Dr. Hans Selye, the pioneer of modern day stress research developed the idea of understanding our response to stress in terms either 'fight' or 'flight'.

Definitions of Stress

Today there are numerous definitions of what stress is. I am just going to give you two. In the book, 'Break the Stress Cycle', Sachs defined stress as our perception of an event or an experience as difficult, threatening, unpleasant or challenging.

And Saunders who writes on 'Teenage Stress' talks about stress as a cause and a consequence. It has a circular effect and can accumulate unseen, and can be very insidious.

4 Statements about Stress

Now let us look at four statements about stress. And I am going to ask you to raise your hand if you think the statement is either True or False.

Stress Statement 1

Okay, let us begin. First statement – Only those people who are weak experience stress. Hands up for 'True', hands up for 'False'. Most people have gone with False. Well, in fact, you are right. We all actually experience stress in our lives, and it is not a question of whether we do experience stress but what we do and how we handle that stress.

Stress Statement 2

Second statement, again hands up for 'True' and hands up for those who think it is 'False' - All stress is bad. Those who think it is True, and those who think it is False. Okay, again most people have gone for False, and in fact you are right. We actually need stress in our lives. Without stress, we would never find the 'Get Up and Go' to actually get up and go. There's been identified four types of stress in our lives - eustress, under stress, over stress and distress. Let us just go through each of those for a moment.

4 Types of Stress - Stress Type 1 is Eustress

Eustress is often understood as good stress. This recognizes that as human beings, we need and thrive on some degree of stress in our lives. It is often seen as a motivating factor that stimulates us to greater accomplishments or better performance. And is often associated with exciting things in our lives such as, sporting events, being in love or winning the lottery.

Stress Type 2 is Understress

The second type of stress, understress, is often described as rust-out. It can be just as debilitating as burn out. It is where we experience situations of under stimulation and has a very negative effect, often resulting in boredom, fatigue and dissatisfaction.

Stress Type 3 is Overstress

The third type of stress is overstress where we push ourselves beyond our limits.

Stress Type 4 is Distress

And the fourth type of stress is distress, which involves often unresolved feelings of fear, anxiety and frustration.

Overstress + Distress = Burnout

Now when you combine over stress with distress, you actually end up in burnout. And burnout, it is about emotional exhaustion, depersonalization,

and reduced personal accomplishment. Put simply, burnout is about taking on too much too intensely and for too long.

Stress Statement 3

Okay, let us go back to our statements, just a couple of more to go. Again, hands up for True, hands up for False. The best way to deal with stress is just to take a holiday. Hands up those who think it is True and those who think it is False. Well in fact, it is probably about half and half. And in fact, you are all right. It is both True and False. Because taking a holiday can actually help us relax and get away from things. Although there is lot of research that suggests that actually getting to go on the holiday, the preparation can be stressful in itself. But taking a holiday does not necessary deal with the underlying stress that often surfaces again when we come back. Who has ever been on a holiday come back to work and it feels like, almost immediately, you are back into feeling stressed again? Well, in fact, research suggests that within 48 hours of returning to work, a lot people have found themselves just as stressed as before they went on holidays.

Stress Statement 4

Last statement, again True and False - Who believes if only I was better organized, I wouldn't get stressed? Hands up for True, hands up for False. Well, in fact, again pretty much half and half. In fact, time management can actually help us in reducing our stress but it is only one component of a

complex issue, and time management alone is not the answer to dealing with stress. Often, time management experts suggest that you make a list of your stresses, prioritize the order of how you are to deal with them, and then go about doing so.

I just want to give you an example of one cartoon that really looks at this prioritizing and time management. There is a gentleman sitting at the desk, and he is saying, "I did what they recommended for stress and I assigned all my tasks A, B, or C priority. Here is the list – 182 As, 2 Bs, and 1 C, now what do I do?" And that is the bit like using time management alone to deal with stress.

6 Sources of Stress in Our Lives

And because stress is such a complex issue, let us spend just a little bit of time looking at our sources of stress in our lives. In the book, "The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook", there are four basic sources of stress suggested.

Stress Source 1 – Environmental Stress

The first one is Environmental, where we are bombarded by demands from the environment around us - traffic, noise pollution and even the change in the weather.

Stress Source 2 – Social Stress

The second one is Social, which includes deadlines, money worries, relationships with others and demands on our time and attention.

Stress Source 3 – Physiological Stress

The third source of stress is Physiological, such as life changes for adolescents, menopause, illness, aging, and also lack of exercise and sleep and adequate diet. It also includes our bodies' reaction to environmental or social threats, which produce headaches, muscle tension and anxiety.

Stress Source 4 – Psychological Stress

The fourth type or source of stress is Psychological and these are our thoughts and how we interpret them and translate them into our experiences and reactions to stress. It includes aspects of our personality, our thinking style and our belief system, all of which are related to our experiences and knowledge.

Stress Source 5 – Organizational Stress

I want to add two further sources of stress or categories. The fifth one I would add is Organizational, and these are factors within our organizations, within our workplace and our jobs and our job roles that cause us stress.

Stress Source 6 – Significant Events

And the last category is about Significant events, Michael Tunnecliffe, in his book on 'How to Understand and Manage Stress', talks about this as 'Critical Incident Stress'. He points out that most people develop a range of strategies to manage stress in our daily lives. But when we are confronted by a single significant stressor like serious accident, illness, death and severe family problems, our coping skills may become overwhelmed. Critical incidence stress is actually a whole workshop in itself. And I would suggest, if you are dealing with these issues, to look at some of Michael Tunnecliffe's work.

Is Our Society Becoming More or Less Stressed?

So, there are lot of factors that can affect our stress levels, and how we deal with stress. Now another question for you all - Is our society becoming more or less stressed? Who thinks more? Just about everybody in the room. Who thinks less? One brave person at the back. And who is too stressed to even think about answering the question? We won't go into that now. Okay, it actually seems like our society is becoming more stressed. Indeed, in this century the greatest threat to the health of our society may not be heart disease or cancer, it may well be chronic stress. In fact, studies suggest that there continues to be an increase in those experiencing stress both in terms of numbers and across the age ranges, from childhood through adolescence into adulthood.

Stress on Children

Let us take a moment and look at stress across the age ranges. Stress on children, it seems that childhood stress is increasing in both its frequency and severity. Some of the factors that may contribute to this stress include the pressure on children to mature emotionally and psychologically at an increasingly earlier age. And a decrease in the number of caring adults living with children, and the subsequent reduction in adult love and support.

Stress on Adolescents

For adolescents, it seems stress is increasing as well as they deal with increasing family dysfunction, peer demands, academic concerns and substance abuse issues.

Stress on Adults

For adults, stress increases as we have to deal with the concepts of self and individuality, where we are defined not by who we are but by what we have. And in the workplace, Wilson suggests that the work place itself has become a soulless place, as creativity has been destroyed through cross cutting, competitiveness and the fear of redundancy, constant changes, deadlines, time constraints, and lack of job security.

The Land of the Lost Weekend

Further, it seems that the promises of the technological age have not resulted in increased leisure time, reduced stress and a more relaxed

lifestyle. In fact, in some ways, almost the opposite has occurred, as we have become what is known as 'The Land of the Lost Weekend'. Mobile phones, computers, the internet and email facilities have made us both instantly contactable and also instantly reactable, often experiencing information overload. For many people, technology has actually become a source of greater stress rather than a means of reducing stress.

Technotress

As Weil and Rosen suggest, because technology is being thrust upon us at a pace and a volume greater than we desire, there is an enormous number of people experiencing what they call 'Technostress'. And what about those in helping-based professions, and volunteers as well? Well, an array of studies have recognized that these professionals and volunteers have a heightened vulnerability to experiencing negative stress and burnout in their lives.

The 7 Steps for Dealing with Stress

Now, who is feeling totally distressed and stressed out by all of these? Well, all is not lost. Let us now look at the seven steps of dealing with managing and even eliminating stress in our lives.

Step 1– Understanding Your Stress

Step 1 is about understanding our stress, knowing where your stress is coming from. You need to actually know where your stress is coming from in order to deal with it. Okay, let us take out a lined sheet of paper and a pen,

and let us look at writing a blueprint for your own personal stress. Now, this is going to take a little while and for those people listening to this recording, you may want to pause at different stages, write some things down and start again.

Column 1 – Stress From?

Now on the paper, we are going to draw 6 columns, let us start with the first column and put the title at the top **Stress From?**, because we are going to look at some of the areas where your stress comes from.

Column 2 – Negative Self Talk

In the second column, could you put the heading **Self-Talk**, and next to that put a minus or a negative sign. Because we will be looking at some of the negative self talk that may go along with how you deal with your stress.

Column 3 – Positive Self Talk

In the third column, could you put the same heading **Self-Talk**, but this time with a plus or positive sign. Because we are going to look at different ways of using positive self talk.

Column 4 – Rating

In the fourth column, would you write the heading **Rating** and this only needs to be a very thin column, because we are going to rate your areas of stress.

Column 5 – Steps

Now in the fifth column, could you put the title **Steps** because we are going to look at some steps in dealing with stress.

Column 6 – Resources

And now, sixth and last column, the title **Resources**.

So, on your page now, you should have six columns with the headings reading across - Stress From, Self Talk-, Self Talk+, Rating, Steps, and the last column, Resources.

Category 1 – Heading 1 is Illness

Okay, now let us go back to the first column and under the heading **Stress**, we are going to actually look at ten categories of stress areas and under each category, we are going to answer four questions and this will give you an idea of where your stress is coming from. So, in the first column under the heading of Stress, could you write the word '**Illness**' and then underneath the word 'Illness', the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4, because I am going to ask you four questions in this category, and I would like you to write next to the numbers, either 'YES' or 'NO' in response.

Okay let us go. These are the questions relating to **Illness**.

Question 1: Have you been noticing some new aches and pains, but you just haven't had time to go to the doctor?

Question 2: Do you worry about those faulty genes you inherited and when they are going to kick in?

Question 3: When you feel sick, do you refuse to stay home for anything less than almost death?

Question 4: Do you secretly fear that you have a serious health problem but avoid going to the doctor because you do not want to find out the truth?

Category 2 is Money

Our next heading is **Money**, so if you could write the word 'Money' and underneath numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and again just answer 'YES' or 'NO' for each of these questions.

Question 1: Do you live from pay packet to pay packet?

Question 2: Do you put money into savings for a rainy day only to withdraw it again every few weeks when it starts to shower?

Question 3: Are there nights when you can't sleep because you are thinking about how to pay the bills?

Question 4: When it comes to finances, do you and your partner often have different ideas about money which has lead to disagreements?

Category 3 is Time Management

Our next heading, heading 3 is **Time Management**, and again could you number 1 to 4.

Question 1: Do you consistently think about a growing list of things you have to do?

Question 2: Do you often do two things at once like typing a letter on the computer while talking to someone on the phone?

Question 3: Do you feel impatient when stuck in a line at the bank? I wonder if we might all answer 'yes' to that one?

Question 4: If you misplaced your diary, would you know what you have to do tomorrow?

Category 4 is Partner

Okay, let us go on to the next category, category 4. Could you put the heading **Partner**? And again 4 questions if you could answer 'YES' or 'NO' too.

Question 1: Do you argue with your partner over minor issues?

Question 2: Do you feel that your partner is doing his or her share around the house?

Question 3: In the last month, was there a time when the two of you got away alone together?

Question 4: Do you find yourself arguing about the same issues even over things that happened years ago but never have got resolved?

Category 5 is Social Life

Right, category 5, heading **Social Life**. Again 4 questions, 'YES' or 'NO'.

Question 1: Do you have a hard time saying 'No' to people who ask you to volunteer, chaperone, or help out?

Question 2: Are you the one responsible for replying to invitations in your family?

Question 3: When there is the birthday, wedding, or other gift to buy, are you the one who purchases it, wraps it, and finds the card for it?

Question 4: If your family goes on vacation, are you the one who researches the destination, buys the tickets and make sure the dog gets to the kennel?

Category 6 is Children

Now, category 6, and the heading is **Children**, four questions again.

Question 1: Do you regularly act as the kids' chauffer?

Question 2: Is there more than one toddler running around your house right now?

Question 3: Do any of your kids have more than three organized activities or lessons per week, not counting school?

Question 4: Do you have at least one teenager in the house?

Category 7 is Family Problems

Let us go on to category 7, hang in there, we are getting there, category 7 is **Family Problems**, and 4 questions again.

Question 1: Are you struggling to make a blended family work?

Question 2: Are you dealing with issues of abuse, either from your past or in your present?

Question 3: Now that you are all adults, do you still believe that mom loved your brother best or your sister best?

Question 4: Do you feel angry or depressed whenever you think about your family?

Category 8 is Parents

Category 8, the heading is **Parents** and if you would answer 'YES' or 'NO' to these 4 questions.

Question 1: Are your parents living within a short distance of you?

Question 2: Are your parents struggling with significant health problems?

Question 3: Do you worry about how you will care for your parents when they become too old to live alone?

Question 4: Do you still simmer with resentment about the way your parents brought you up?

Category 9 is Work

The second last category is that of **Work** and again 4 questions.

The first question, Question 1: Do you feel like you have to succeed at work all the time?

Question 2: Do you find yourself not wanting to talk to co-workers?

Question 3: Do you find yourself easily irritated by others at work?

Question 4: Has work become very boring, tedious and routine?

Category 10 is Other

And our last category is under the word **Other** and this has to do with critical incidents that you may be experiencing such as a death, serious accident or

other issues. If you are experiencing such incidents, then automatically put a 'YES' in this category. Okay, we now have our 10 categories to look at our sources of stress.

Yes to 2 or More Categories

Now, let us have look again at that first column, if you have answered 'YES' to two or more questions in each of those categories, then it is likely that this is an area that is causing stress for you in your life.

Step 2 – Your Negative Self-Talk

Let us move on now to step 2 in moving from distress to de-stress, and look at our self-talk. Your self-talk is your subconscious mind and conscious mind at work. If you picture your mind to be like an iceberg, then your conscious mind is that small tip that is seen above the surface, and your subconscious mind is the vast bulk of the iceberg below the surface. And to put that simply, you are what your self-talk tells you, you are.

Claude Bristol, in his book written in 1948 called, 'The Magic of Believing', explains that, just as the conscious mind is the source of thought, so the subconscious mind is the source of power. It is in the subconscious mind that all our programming exists for walking, talking, healing our body and ways of dealing with stress. So what you tell yourself, your self-talk about stress becomes how you often deal with stress. It is about talking the walk inside your head, not just walking the talk.

Powerful Negative Self-Talk Patterns

Let me give you a few examples of how powerful this self-talk is and how it becomes the part of our personality, attitudes and values, and therefore part of our behaviour. And you may relate to some of these examples or know someone who fits some of these behaviour patterns.

Andrew Matthews in his book, 'Being Happy', gives us some examples of how this negative self talk becomes behaviour patterns. Let us look at few.

Accident Pattern

The first one is **accident** patterns. These are people who are accident prone, always seem to be having accidents. If there is a ladder to fall off, or a ladder to fall on them, it will happen to them.

Broke Pattern

Another pattern of behaviour that relates to negative self-talk is the **broke** pattern. Have you ever met someone who is always broke? It is not necessarily how much they have but what they do with it. So as soon as these people get money, they get rid of it, spend it, just get rid of it.

Indispensible Pattern

Then there is another pattern, this is the **indispensible** pattern. This is where the person knows that the moment they go on holidays, everything

and everyone at work will fall apart. And in fact, their self-talk, their subconscious actually sets it up so that this does happen.

Miss Out Pattern

Another pattern is that of **I always miss out** pattern. This is the person whose self-talk says that they are never in the right place at the right time and others always get the opportunities, the chances or the bargains.

Perfectionism Pattern

And just one more pattern which is very common today is the **perfectionism** pattern, where everything needs to be perfect or it is just not good enough. So, the person ends up with a double edged sword, with a desire to do well, but the fear of the consequences of not doing well.

Powerful Positive Self-Talk Patterns

Now, let us compare some of these negative patterns of accident, being broke, and so on, with a few other patterns that Andrew Mathews talks about, and these are based on positive self-talk.

Always Healthy Pattern

What about the **I am always healthy** pattern, where our state of health is determined by the programs we have between our ears, and the relationship between our mind and body.

Right Place, Right Time Pattern

And another positive pattern of self talk is **I am always in the right place at the right time**, to take up opportunities, to sell those shares when the market is up or when another opportunity arises, it is not just luck, it is part of my self-talk, my pattern of seeing myself in the world.

Doing and Always Making Money

And one final positive pattern is the **what I do I always end up making money** self-talk. You can see when we begin to use positive self-talk, it can make a difference in what we are attracted to, what we move to and how we deal with stress in our life.

Write Down Your Negative Self-Talk

Now, let us take a moment and reach down inside ourselves and write on your sheet in column number 3, the negative self-talk that you may have in relation to those areas of stress that you have identified, whether it is about money, family, parents. Write down the negative self-talk that goes along with those areas of stress. So step two in dealing with stress and managing stress is recognizing our negative self-talk that goes along with those areas in our life where we are feeling stressed.

Step 3 – Your Positive Self-Talk

So, let us look at step 3, yes you guessed it, it is beginning to change our self-talk from negative to positive in those areas of our lives where we are

feeling stressed. So in the next column, and take your time about this, can you write the positive self-talk, which is the opposite to the negative self-talk you identified in those areas of your life where you are feeling stressed. So step 3 in dealing with and managing stress is beginning to change by starting with your own self-talk in those areas of your life where you feel stressed. It is about moving from negative self-talk, as you have identified in the column, to positive self talk in the next column. Now this is going to take some time. So for those people listening, you may want to turn off the tape and write down some positive self-talk.

Visualizing Yourself in a Positive Situation with Your Self-Talk

Okay, so now you have written down some positive self-talk, the important aspect of not only using that self-talk is to also visualize yourself in a positive rather than negative situation. So, that in fact your self-talk is then reinforced. If you do nothing else from listening to this tape but every night before you go to sleep, repeat that positive self-talk and begin to visualize yourself in a positive rather than negative picture in dealing with your stress, then I guarantee over time. And it does take time to change our thinking patterns, you will begin to gravitate to this new positive picture of yourself and begin to develop other patterns of response to your stress.

Your Change is met with Resistance

Do remember, however, this change in you will be met by resistance by those around you who are used to the way you usually deal with stress and

by yourself as well. It is very easy to move back into the negative self-talk that is part of your usual patterns of dealing with stress.

How Powerful Patterns of Behaviour Are

If you want to know how powerful patterns of behaviour are and our self-talk, let me give you an example. Now most people when we think about our childhood, remember things that our parents said to us, often when we were being told off, that we had thought 'I will never ever say to my children when I am a parent'. And then sure enough in the heat of the moment, we have actually heard ourselves say the exact same words that our parents have said to our own children. It is literally like hearing our mother or father's voice. You can see how powerful those patterns of self-talk become and it does take time and persistence and determination to change these.

Step 4 – Defining Ease of Change

Now, let us move on to step 4 in dealing with stress. And this is about deciding what stresses are changeable and where to start to make those changes. If you look at your 10 categories that you had in first column and those that you answered 'YES' to more than twice, it is important now to begin to rate those, and our rating system is going to be this:

1. Easy to change
2. Difficult to change and
3. Very difficult to change

So in column 1, where you have identified your areas or sources of stress, could you look at those now and rate them in terms of one, being the easiest to change through to, three, very difficult to change. This fourth step in dealing with stress will give you an idea of where to begin. It is always best to begin change with that which we find the most easiest to change and then build on this success in dealing with other issues and sources of stress in our life.

Step 5 – Developing an Action Plan

Okay, let us look at step 5. Step 5 is about developing an action plan in relation to your sources of stress. Start with those ideas that you have rated as the easiest to begin to change and write down a series of steps in which you will go about undertaking your goal of either changing, influencing, or coping with this stress. So, look at brainstorming all the ideas on developing your action plan in relation to responding to this stress.

Now, this action plan can be added to and changed just as you go and today we are only just touching the surface. Do this plan for each of your areas of stress that you have identified, again starting with the easiest to change and through to the hardest. Often people find it difficult to list these mini steps for all the areas where they experience stress, and can become overwhelmed by it. So just begin today looking at one area, the easiest change, and develop your action plan which incorporates a range of mini steps.

Let me give you an example of mini plan. For example, if your source of stress is dealing with money problems, you may begin by listing a range of actions such as - opening an account that will automatically divert money from your pay into a savings account, another step may be keeping a record for a month of where every cent goes, and so on. So, your action plan is about small steps, mini plans, mini steps, and it is about beginning slowly now to walk the talk as well as talking the walk in your own head.

Step 6 – Identifying and Utilizing Resources around You

Okay, let us move on to step 6 in moving from distressed to de-stressed. This step is interlinked with our mini plans. But I actually like to pull it out as a separate step because people often do not acknowledge it's importance and think that they have to deal with stress all alone. The sixth step is about identifying and utilizing the resources around you. In our last column, when you have identified the sources of stress you are going to deal with, list all those resources that may help you in dealing with that stress. It maybe family, friends, maybe counselling service, it maybe joining a yoga or exercise class. It maybe listening to tapes, reading books on dealing with stress, whatever it is, we do not always have to go it alone and it is important that you identify the resources around you that can assist you in dealing with whatever stresses you have in your life.

So, in the final column, take your time, pause and write down, brainstorm as many ideas and resources for dealing with the stress. So, now you have a

list of resources outside yourself that can assist you in dealing with stress. Perhaps, begin by choosing one of these resources to incorporate in your action plan. It is about moving from what our society calls the 'brave face ethic' whereby we simply deal with our stress and put on a brave face. But in fact, sometimes we need to acknowledge our stress and call on the resources to assist us.

Revising and Adapting your Stress Sheet

So, now have a look at your sheet. You would have filled in at least some parts on every column of this sheet. This is the basis of starting your steps to deal with and manage stress in your life. This sheet can be the first of many as it evolves, changes, and adapts. Put this sheet somewhere where you can look at it easily - on the fridge or cupboard door. And at least once a week take it down, write on it, change it and add to it, and also add more sheets and mini plans as you begin to develop different ways and ideas of dealing with your stress.

Step 7 – Have Fun and Laugh

Now, let us go on to the last step. The seventh step is not on the sheet because it can't always be written down easily, it almost, and in fact, it has to just be lived. The seventh and last step is to have fun and use humour. It is about every day in some way finding something to laugh about, because research shows that a good belly laugh has been found to boost the immune system and reduce the hormones that cause stress. Frequent laughter can

relax muscles, help control pain, lower blood pressure and reduce stress, while increasing our joy. I want you to just take a moment and close your eyes and just think of a time when you really laughed at something or about something, in fact it was a time when you actually found it hard to stop laughing. Now just notice your body, you begin automatically to feel better and if you took a camera and took a picture of each person now in the room with their eyes closed, you would see that it automatically makes us smile. So, take the time every day to smile, laugh and find something in your life to feel joy about.

Revising the 7 Steps to Move from Distressed to De-stressed

So in the time we have spent together today, we have looked at the seven steps to help you and others to go from being distressed to de-stressed. Just to recapture those steps.

Step 1 is to understand where your stress is coming from.

Step 2 is to identify your negative self-talk that goes along with this stress.

Step 3 is begin to use the opposite type of self-talk, positive self-talk.

Step 4 is to look at where your stress is coming from in your life and rate the stress from easy, difficult to very difficult.

Step 5 is about developing action plans or mini plans to deal with your stress, starting with that which is the easiest to change.

Step 6 is about becoming aware of and utilize a range of resources in your mini plans, and

Step 7 is of course in every day in some way have fun and laugh.

Examples to Laugh About

Now, in every day, life has numerous things to have fun and laugh about. Let me give you some examples. These are actual labels and instructions on products.

The first one, this is a Sears hair dryer and the instructions are, 'Do not use while sleeping'. Another one, on a hotel provided shower cap in a box, which says, 'Fits one head', or an American airlines packet of nuts with the instructions, 'Open packet, eat nuts'. And there are still more, on a frozen dinner packet, the serving suggestion says 'Defrost'. And on some Sainsbury's peanuts there is a warning, which says, 'Contains peanuts'.

Some of the business signs that are fun to laugh at as well, this was seen on a garbage truck, 'Satisfaction guaranteed or double your trash back'. And in a cemetery, 'Drive carefully, we can wait'. Or in an office, the emergency evacuation plan read, 'Run like hell'.

Want some more? Well, these are actual signs found in England. In an office, 'Will the person who took the stepladder yesterday, please bring it back or further steps will be taken'. A notice in a health food shop, which read, 'Closed due to illness'. In fact, it would have been good if they were along here today for this workshop. And a sign on a repair shop door which read 'We repair anything', and underneath, 'Please knock hard on the door,

the bell doesn't work'. And lastly, it is not easy to get into heaven, this was a sign on a church door, 'This is the gate of heaven enter ye all by this door', and underneath in small letters, 'This door is kept locked because of the draft, please you use side door'. So, you can see, in everyday life, we can always find something to laugh about.

The Four Most Important Questions

Now I want to ask you four questions before we finish, and I do this in all my workshops.

The first question and I am not going to ask you to do it, but if you would stand, if you can, the first question is - Who in the room can dance? About 20 or so people. Okay, have a seat.

Who in the room can sing? Oh a few less, few less, okay, I am not going to ask you sing. Have a seat.

And third - Who can paint or draw? About half a dozen of people.

Okay, one more question and if you would stand. If you can do all three - dance, sing and paint? Okay, we have got one or two brave people in the room. Okay have a seat.

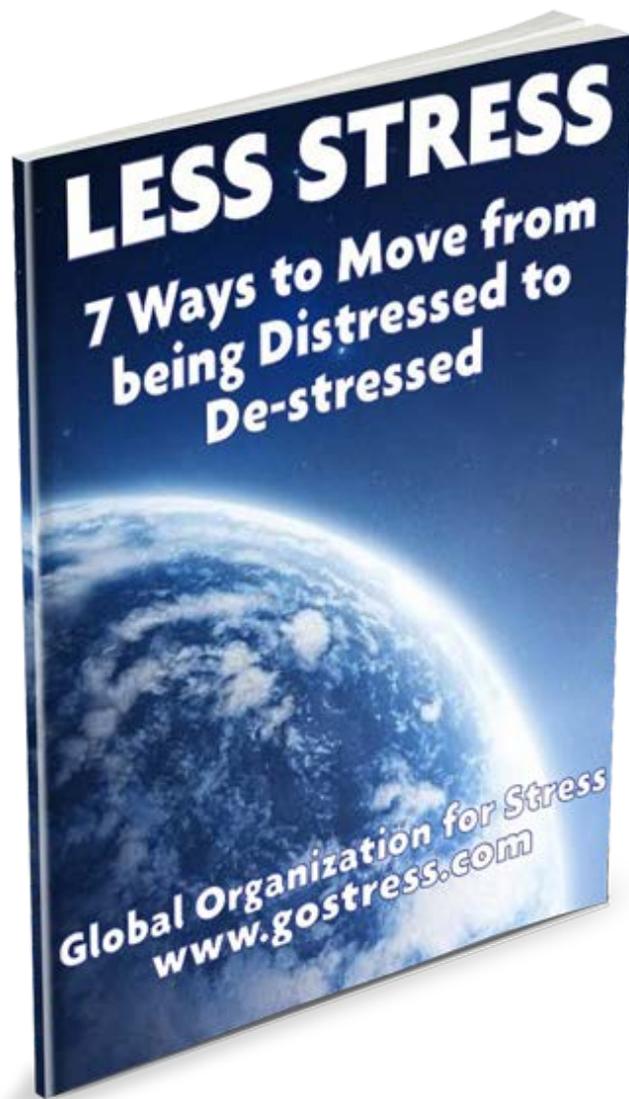
Now, the interesting thing about this is, having worked a lot with children, when I go into a preschool and I say to a class of preschool students, "Who in the room can dance?" Every single one of them jumps up and dances around. If I ask them, "Who can sing?" guess what happens, they all jump

up, singing and dancing at the same time. And if I ask, "Okay, who can paint?" "Oh! me, me, me." Everybody wants to paint and dance and sing.

Now, what I am asking you is what happens to us from preschool when we are little to now, because I never asked you how well you could do it, I simply asked you if you could. And somewhere along the line through school, family, friends, parents, society in general, we have learnt that because we cannot do it as well as someone else, and therefore we cannot do it. And in fact, all of you can dance, sing and paint. And it does not matter how well, it is the fact you can.

So, in your life, find the opportunity to have fun, to dance, sing and paint. And as Robert Fulghum says, "Live a balanced life, learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some".

Thank you for joining me today. Thankyou.



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