

Is Stress your No. 1 Enemy?

By Pat Heydlauff

Class attendees often ask me “can I do anything about all this “stress” in my life? I feel like a bundle of nerves at the end of the day”. Others question, “why can’t I just relax and not let “things” bother me so much”. I even get questions occasionally like, “is it possible to control some of my stress through what I do in my surroundings”.

Stress comes from many sources in our daily lives. Just driving down a busy street can be unnerving if someone cuts you off or runs a red light right in front of you. Add to that an overly demanding work schedule, meeting the constant needs of your family, keeping up with the never ending tasks of caring for your home and then there’s the 24 hour news cycle where they only broadcast negative things. The worse the crises, the more time the news spends focusing on it. When have you ever turned the news on and found them reporting on a very “positive energy” event? No wonder you feel like stress is your No. 1 enemy.

In our world today with cement cities, sound pollution and isolated environments created by cubicles and computers, it is difficult to remain in a peaceful frame of mind. In our microwave society which expects instant gratification, everything moves at a very fast pace, including the demands placed on our lives. This fast pace makes many of us feel like we are spinning totally out of control; and the more out of control we feel, the more stressed we become. The reverse of this is also true. The more we feel we are “in control of self”, the less stressed we feel.

Yes, there are a few simple positive energy steps you can take that will help you be in better control of self and feel much less stressed. Step one is to create a “transition zone” when entering your home whether it is at the end of a long day or even a quick trip to the grocery store. If you stop to think about it, even shopping for groceries is no minor undertaking with the wide variety of choices, the higher cost of food and long lines at the checkout counters. This “transition zone” can be your front door’s formal foyer or your

entrance leading in from the garage. If there are no designated spaces in your home for such an area create one with an area rug or a tri-folding wall screen. Every time you enter your home, use this “transition zone” as the place to leave all negative thinking behind. Make a real effort to deposit all of those stressing factors behind as soon as you step onto that rug or into your foyer. This will eventually become habit forming and you will be amazed at how much more “in control” you will feel as soon as you enter your home.

Next, survey the inside of the house for calming colors. Check walls and floors first and then furnishings. Bright and bold colors are highly energizing. If you are already stressed those colors will serve to further aggravate and invigorate you rather than calm you. Especially avoid hot high energy colors like reds and oranges as well as dark depressing colors such as black and deep blues. Neutral colors and those colors that come from nature as long as they are soft and pastel are very soothing and stress relieving. The more soothing colors you have in your surroundings the more they act as a buffer from the outside world. Soothing colors are more peaceful and help you de-stress as you unwind in your own home.

The third thing you should do is surround yourself with soft light and relaxing music. Harsh bright light and loud nerve jangling music further fuels your already high stress level. Instead of overhead lighting, use table lamps with soft bulbs and torchiere floor lamps that send lighting upward to softly reflect the light off the ceiling. Or, install dimmers on wall switches to soften the overhead lighting. Soft lighting is soothing to the eye and relaxing. As to the sounds you surround yourself with, keep the volume low and the music peaceful. If you have specific music preferences, listen to those as long as they create a peaceful atmosphere. If you watch television, keep the volume down and keep your viewing light and fun. Pick and choose your viewing pleasure with stress free themes in mind.

If stress is your No. 1 enemy today, it is important that you take as many appropriate steps as possible to lower your stress levels. It is not simply a matter of protecting your relationships with others, whether at work or at home. More importantly, it is a matter of

your personal health and well being. Stress robs your body of much needed energy and depletes your ability to cope with day to day activities. Create a transition zone in your home so you can leave behind all of those stressful thoughts you've been carrying around all day long. Through color and music, make your home a calm and peaceful sanctuary, a place you can truly live in a stress free environment.

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