

## Stress - What is it really?

The way we humans respond to Life is as varied as there are combinations of DNA. Even, though many know this fact, we are still trying, unsuccessfully, to find one special "cure all" (often a drug) for common problems. For example - STRESS the big "S" word that is used so often as if everybody is thinking about the same thing. Actually some people are thinking pain, others discomfort, low energy, energy-overload, anxiety, depression, anger, frustration, tedium, fear, shame, loneliness, anguish or other experiences of intensity.

When feeling under "stress" from whatever source, the mind tries to find a way to lessen the feelings of intensity. Some of these are healthy, often learned behaviours like relaxing and nourishing ourselves, regenerating with positive activities like listening to music, having a laugh, walking in a park, slowing down generally, contemplating how to change course so intensity doesn't build up.

There are however, learned or developed behaviours that don't help, like: -

"I'm having a problem so I'll go faster and faster until the bubble bursts one way or another and the awful feeling is gone"

or: -

"If I keep frantically worrying about this and hyping myself up something bad won't happen"

or: -

"When people are getting upset with me and stress is mounting I'll make it worse or I'll shut off completely."

Many of such stress responses will then get categorized as unfriendly, obnoxious, hyperactive, ADD, autism, and then the deep cause of this response is forgotten. By understanding why the stress release is done in a particular way is life enhancing.

Whatever the responses to stress are they have come because the individual hasn't yet got a better way to cope with what is for them "stress". From one person's perspective to another's, stress can look completely different. You may not think that a certain environment is stressful but the person alongside you may find it overwhelming. These differences can be seen as different levels of sensitivity to certain stimuli. Heightened sensitivity can be a great asset when healthy stress coping mechanisms are easily available, but if not the intensity of experiences become much more stressful.

Parents can have three children who all develop different ways to deal with intensity. One may flop into an armchair after some all-out physical activity, another may want to shut off from everything and read a book and the third bursts into tears. Whether we consider any one of these options good or bad will depend on our own personal experiences, and society as a whole makes other judgements based on cultural norms. For some cultures shrieking and wailing is seen as a normal way to express grief, in other cultures this is seen as childish and sombre tearless silence is seen as good behaviour. Who is right?

We could then say that if a person is becoming more distressed by their coping mechanism, feel disadvantaged or imprisoned by it or is having difficulty" with their relationships with others because of the way they handle intensity, then healing is a good option. It is then a matter of looking at the whole person and the journey that led them to an exaggerated symptom of stress and with this deeper understanding start the healing process.

With holistic counselling and mind-body medicine therapy the aim is always to understand the journey a person has taken to where they are now and deal with the core issues that are stopping their forward progress. Each person's pathway has events to which they have responded and formed patterns of behaviour, and each of these must be honoured and understood. Wildflower essences that heal negative responses can then restore the balance...

Along the way to the deeper process relief can also be gained through wildflowers whose healing properties lessen the trauma of the intensity. Hops Bush helps to relieve the hyperactive rush that hinders relaxation and sleep by earthing this overload of energy. Yellow Borage helps to still the mind whose thoughts are scattered. Purple Nymph Waterlily helps to bring the flaring emotions into balance and restore composure. Yellow Leschenaultia helps to unblock the active mind that can't connect, listen to and communicate with other people.

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