

SOUND CHANGES™
10 Ways to Grow From Stress
By Ellen Simon, M.S., M. Ed., LPC

www.imadulation.com

It's only natural to resist or want to run away from uncomfortable feelings. However it's the stressful situations that can best help challenge the spirit to reveal inner strength, courage, resiliency and mostly serve to unfold your potential for growth.

The great test every stressful event has to offer is the opportunity to transform the negative into a positive by using the power of your free will. Every single situation contains a choice for us to either shrink and resist, or to expand our capacity for growth by opening, accepting what is, and relaxing into the moment.

When we welcome each obstacle as an opportunity to growth and suspend our judgment and resistance, this will enable us to develop as stronger, more resilient and wiser for the experience.

Your choice is: constrict, shrink and cover your light, or expand, open, and reveal your inner light.

The uncomfortable feeling we call stress happens in your body but starts in your mind.

In addition to the perception of danger or life threatening events, there are three thinking habits that activate the stress response in the body.

The first is negative attention, or focusing on what you don't want/like. Seek to turn your attention to what you can learn from the experience - this will inspire growth. The Law of Attraction will bring into your life that which you focus on and what you play on the movie screen of your mind.

The second common habit to induce stress is an insistence and needing that things be a certain way, rather than preferring the same. Insistence on things being a certain way implies an attachment to a particular outcome, and thus sets you up for disappointment. If instead you *prefer* an outcome, you still identify your wishes and desires, yet this attitude contains energy of letting go. Preferring carries an element of trust in the unfolding of life and the confidence that whatever happens, you have the resources and ability to handle life.

The third thinking habit to fan the flame of stress is the tendency to carry the present moment to the future. Have you ever found yourself thinking: "This will never end", "I can't stand this", "I am trapped like this forever". If rather, we stay in the present moment and remind ourselves that this too shall pass then we will

be saved from needless suffering and compounding of our difficulties. **It all starts with a willingness to look inward:**

Now that you have identified some of your thought process and habits, it is time to replace those old outworn ways of thinking and behaving with the following 10 **strategies to stress less and grow spiritually:**

1. Healthy Thinking - focus on what you do want rather than what you don't want, let go of insisting or clinging to a particular outcome. Where are your thoughts? Are you focusing on what is wrong? Or is your awareness on the solution or even on the blessing that is often revealed down the road? Are you turning your wants into needs? When you NEED what you WANT then you create unnecessary stress. Try shifting your needs into preferences, and focusing on the solution rather than the problem.
2. Mindful Breathing - breathe in fully and completely let go of your breath. Breathing is a metaphor for life. Take it in fully and let go of what you do not need. Breathing immediately changes the quality of the beating of your heart and this affects your entire body and mind. Breathe mindfully- it helps you to stay connected to your inner spirit as you go through the day.
3. Regular Moving – stretch your body and keep it flexible and resilient like your mind. Exercise is the best way to release accumulated stress in the body and to honor the temple that is your body.
4. Conscious Awareness – maintain a consciousness of your habitual ways of responding to the world, do they serve to develop your potential for growth? As you choose to be mindful of your thoughts, words and actions, you will develop the inner habit of taking an ongoing inventory of your consciousness and be better able to choose peace, joy and serenity in the face of stress.
5. Clear Communication – be assertive, state your truth with harmless intention and allow another to have a truth that may differ from yours. Be willing to express your feelings with an attitude of openness and without blame. Seek to use a calm and at least neutral tone of voice if feeling upset. Respect your needs and celebrate diversity in your loved ones.
6. Healthy Eating-
7. Having fun- taking time to play and enjoy unstructured time can recharge our batteries. Spending time in nature and just being reduces stress and serves to re-connect us to the rhythm of nature.

8. Practicing Meditation – relaxing rituals are known to reduce the negative effects that prolonged stress has on the body. Meditation is listening to the voice within.
9. Creative Expression- choosing a hobby or creative activity where you can communicate your feelings and is a rewarding path of growth. Journaling, writing poetry, arts crafts, music and other arts are a path of growth and self expression.
10. Sound Sleep - crucial to managing stress and feelings of well-being. If needed, create a routine for yourself that includes a soothing and calming ritual before bed. If there is something on your mind, talk to a friend or journal - get those feelings out of your body and onto some paper or into a friend's ear! Meditation prior to bedtime can create a nice transition to sleep. A spray of lavender or nutritional supplements may be considered to support a healthy sleep.

Keep in mind these ten strategies as you remember that you are the choice maker. One of the few things you *can* choose is what thoughts you entertain and how you respond to life!!

© 2009 by Ellen Simon www.imadulation.com. Permission to reprint if left intact.

Ellen Simon is a nationally recognized expert in the field of mind body health. Ellen's unique brand of audio programs is in use in hospitals and health care facilities across the country. Author of over 25 titles this article is adapted from Food for Thought® a 6 audio CD set. For more information visit <http://www.imadulation.com>.

