

Laughing in the Face of Stress

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We are faced with stresses every day. Work, children, husbands, parents, friends, neighbors, health—not to mention the problems of the wider world. So how do we manage the stress of it all without becoming overwhelmed and running naked down the street screaming?

Stress is the body's response to any demand to adapt. There are two types of stress: positive and negative. Positive stress provides excitement, opportunity and motivation. Negative stress creates intense pressure, feeling out of control. Stress and pain go hand in hand. Total egea, health is complex—the mind and body are connected. But our response to stress is something we can control. How? By laughing in its face!

Usually, when I call my mother and ask how she is doing, she will say, “Kleo ti mira mou,” which means “I am crying at my fate.” Sometimes, though, when I ask her that same question, she will surprise me and say in Greek, “I am laughing at my fate, since crying at it doesn't do any good.” Since mother knows best, I decided to take her advice and do the same thing. Throughout the years, I've learned to deal with stress in my own life with a simple acronym, LAUGHING: I have passed this on to my clients in my psychotherapy practice and in workshops, as well. Armed with this philosophy, you can laugh in the face of any stress, because you have the ability within you to handle stress. Egea, health, to you.

Listen to our bodies/symptoms

If you are feeling or experiencing these things, your body may be trying to tell you to slow down and pay attention:

- Clumsiness
- Nervous Energy
- Insomnia
- Nightmares
- Lethargy
- Feelings of resentment
- Decreased libido
- Difficulty swallowing or digesting
- Irregular or irritable bowels/gas
- Trouble concentrating
- Headaches/migraines
- Dizziness/faint/blackouts
- Irregular menstrual
- Unexplained chest pain or pressure
- Stiff neck or other joints
- Ulcers
- Asthma/allergies
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Cravings for chemical substances/addictions
- Heart attacks
- Strokes

Accept your symptoms and life situations

- Acknowledge that your symptoms are trying to tell you something
- Stop trying to fight life situations that come your way
- Embrace obstacles as a part of life

Understand our stress triggers and their purpose

- Know that triggers are different for everyone
- Get to know what causes stress for you
- Don't be defeated by these triggers

Some common causes and triggers:

Work
Relational tension
Poor nutrition
Sleep patterns
Money pressures
Being alone
Not enough alone time
Self-image
Chemical substance/dependence
Time pressure
Traffic
Waiting in lines/impatience

Gain knowledge about how to manage stress in a healthy way and alleviate symptoms

Seek help regarding proper nutrition and stress management
Boost your immune system
Avoid sweets
Limit caffeine
Breathe deeply
Stretch
Learn how to sit properly
Drink plenty of water
Get organized
Set clear goals

Have a plan for future potentially stressful situations

Prepare yourself
Learn to see it coming
Think positively
Be grateful
Have options

Integrating the plan when faced with stressors

Designate a no-stress zone
Create a worry box
Team up, ask a buddy for help
Express yourself – allow yourself the freedom to tell others when you are frustrated in a respectful and calm way
Build slack into your schedule
Reduce costs
Get into a routine
Keep a gratitude journal
Keep funny sayings easily accessible
Volunteer
Seek professional help
Hug

No your limits and limitations

Create balance in your life
Be selfish – in a good, proactive way
Know when enough is enough
Don't overextend yourself
Learn to say NO

At work:
Limit calls

Set aside a time when you return all your calls
Work smarter, not harder
Get a life outside of work

Giggle often at serious things

Use humor to diffuse stress

Laughter helps lower blood pressure, improve respiration and circulation

Start with a smile – smiling is linked to changes in brain chemistry

At work:

Embrace corporate absurdity

Choose to be around people that make you laugh

Keep a joke book in your desk drawer

A little humor goes a long way

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