

Clear Your Life of Stress and Anxiety

You can create stress and anxiety in your life. It is not an easy thing to do. You must train yourself to think in certain kinky ways.

With a little practice, you will be able to create stress and anxiety in your life, but you can add to that a feeling of being overwhelmed and depressed.

If you can create stress and anxiety, then you can uncreate it! You ever noticed that small children invariably have a positive outlook on life? They experience little if any, stress and anxiety. What is the thinking that you have learned to do as an adult creating your negative view of life?

The famous therapist, Albert Ellis MD, suggests thinking as the best way to create an unhappy life. It is not just any thinking. It is noteworthy, specific ways of thinking that make the problems.

- **Black-White thinking:** this is where you put everything in boxes of good or bad, right or wrong, righteous or evil. This form of absolute thinking locks you into a rigid way of looking at the world. In some ways, it simplifies life. You don't have to get to know anyone. You can automatically put them in one of your boxes and forget about them. No matter how their behavior changes, everything stays the same for you. "Once an insensitive oaf, always an insensitive oaf." "Once somebody gets on my bad side, they can never get off my bad side."
 - Exercise: Make a list of at least five longtime friends. After each name, list two positive attributes and two negative attributes. Consider each, have their reactions/behaviors changed over the years? There are three possible answers: Yes, they have; No, they have not; I don't know. Were you able to change your black-white thinking when their behavior changed?

This type of rigidity on your part is the result of your fear of emotional pain. For you, emotional pain is terminal! "I can never stand to be hurt this way again." You see pain as something from which you need to be protected. This idea of emotional pain is, of course, false." What you protect, you make weak.

- **Generalizing:** here, you get to interpret a single negative event as a never-ending pattern. For example, Men are... Women are... Democrats are... Republicans are... Uncle Joe is always... This is where you get to take groups of people and label them. "White people are racist and want to keep Blacks down." "Blacks are lazy, shiftless, and violent people." (There

are no absolutes, and that is absolute!) Once you know how a group is, you can feed into your psyche a predetermined response. Your life becomes more straightforward and easier to understand. You never have to check out what they meant by what they said. Before they even open their mouth, you have already made up your mind.

- Exercise: on paper, make a list of groups of people, Jews, Blacks, Whites, Christians, Muslims, Democrats, and Republicans. After each group, write down the labels associated with each of these groups. Does everyone in these groups fit the labels you have attached to the groups? Of course not. Will you continue to hang onto your beliefs about Republicans, Democrats? Of course!
- **Filtering:** Using both mental and physical filters, you get to pick out a single negative detail or belief and dwell on it exclusively. One example of physical filters is selecting one or more gossips who believe the way you do. Use one or more media outlets who believe the way you do to get all your news.

Mental filtering is done by people who have an "ax to grind" and who want to prove their point at any price. For example, He, "In 15 years of marriage, I have never seen anyone I'd rather be married to than you." She, "You mean you been looking for somebody for 15 years?" Because of her filter, she believes that he wants out of the relationship.

One giveaway that somebody is filtering is that they will say something like, "I know what you said, but that isn't what you meant." "You don't feel that way (I know how you really feel)." Most people are not even aware of their filters, so they are stuck and have no way of evaluating alternative information. If you give these people a lie detector test, it would say that they are telling the truth.

- Exercise: The next time someone tells you, "I know what you meant by what you said!" Try responding with: "Let me think about that. . . It sounds like you have a difficult time accepting my feelings. That has got to be hard for you."
- **Disqualifying the Positive:** You do this by rejecting positive experiences and information and insisting that "they don't count" for some reason. In this way, you can maintain a negative, distorted belief that is contradicted by your everyday experiences. These people have the belief that "Nothing lasts forever." For example: "My children's lives are going great. I wonder which one is getting a divorce?" "The teacher called today and gave a

good report of Johnny. Mom thinks, "Tomorrow, Johnny is really going to act out." "We are headed into a major depression. Unemployment always goes down before the crash." Someone tells you, "Your singing was beautiful. You could be a professional." You think, "Oh, it was nothing. I screwed up two of the notes in the last aria. There are so many who can sing better than I."

Israel's Prime Minister Golda Meir once told one of her generals, "You are not that good that you can be that humble." False humility is just another form of fake news. The Bible says, "Pride goeth before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction." This can be confusing because having pride in your work and your children is good. The word "pride" here should have been translated as "*False pride* goeth before a fall..."

- Exercise: the next time someone compliments you, ACCEPT IT! When you don't accept someone's compliment, you call them a liar. If taking a compliment is too hard for you, try saying, "I am so glad that you enjoyed my singing. Thank you so much."

- **Jumping to Conclusions:** There are two ways to do this. 1) *Mind reading*, here you arbitrarily conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you, and you do not bother to check it out. "See, I knew he hated me. Look at the way he looked at me!" 2) *Fortune-telling*, you anticipate that things will turn out badly, and you feel convinced that your prediction is already a fact. Much of negative thinking fall under these two categories. The negative thinker is convinced that they must look for, research, and find all the possible things that could go wrong. In that way, they hope to avoid any disaster that might happen.

The opposite of the negative thinker believes that "I will figure this out as I go along. This person believes that failure means that I have an opportunity to learn and do it differently next time." I have a friend who calls this his "muddle through system." To use the *Muddle Through System*, MTS, you must believe that it is okay to fail, and nothing is a failure if you learn from it. The fear of failure is the fear of rejection or abandonment.

- Exercise: practice failing! Take on projects that you are not sure you know how to do. I have a friend who "fainted her way through nurses' training!" Ask yourself these questions: What is the worst that could happen, the catastrophic. How likely, percentage, is catastrophic to happen? If the catastrophic does happen, could I live

through it? Now, what is the best that could happen, anastrophic? How likely is it to happen? If it happened, could I live through it? The truth is that seldom does the catastrophic or the anastrophic happen. The most likely outcome would be somewhere in the middle. (Some people are more afraid of the anastrophic, being successful, they have already had plenty of experience with failure, catastrophic.)

- **Should Statements** are one of the best ways of creating stress, anxiety, and worry. The problem here is that you are trying to motivate yourself with shoulds and shouldn't's, as if you had to be yelled at and punished before you would do what you should do. These are the same words that your mother used on you as a child to get you to do what she thought you should do. "Musts, "shoulds," "have to," "oughts," and threats fall into the same category. "I have to get the house cleaned before the company comes."

There are three psychological ways to motivate yourself to do something, and there are three ways to create resistance for you. Embarrassment, fear, and love will motivate you to change. Guilt, shame, and threats will create resistance inside of you and make it harder for you to reach your goals.

- Exercise: When faced with "Musts, "shoulds," "have to," "oughts," and threats, such as "I should write Grandma a thank you letter for her Christmas present before she comes to visit in June, or I will be embarrassed." Or, "I should pay my parking tickets." You can add fear by finishing the statement with "before they impound my car." Or, "I should buy Valentine's gifts for my sweetheart." Here, you can change the sentence around to emphasize love. "I want my sweetheart to know how much I love her, so I will buy her some Valentine's gifts."

You can choose to live with anxiety and worry or choose to clean up your thinking. You choose to think, and you can think anything you want to think. Instead of worrying about anxiety and worry, start looking for the sources of your anxiety and worry – – – what you are thinking.

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