

In This Moment I See, Stress Relief For Me!

By Karen Danner

How do you go from a stressed-out, wiggled-out, revved-up, high gear lifestyle to one of balance, harmony and peace? Most think it starts with eliminating stress, when in reality it starts with embracing stress. Stress is an integral part of the peace process. It is from a place of contrast, contradiction, dissatisfaction and discontent that stress bubbles to the surface or festers beneath conscious awareness awaiting an opportunity to communicate with you. Either way, stress will request your attention and that request can show up anywhere from a nudge to an outright knock upside the head. By shifting your perspective and defining stress in a positive light, stress becomes an enriching and enlightening frame of reference and a positive contributor to a balanced lifestyle.

Our perceptions of what is stressful are reflective of our coping skills and response patterns. How we choose to respond to ourselves, others and circumstances contributes to the release of hormones into our bodies. When we respond from a perception that our safety is threatened, adrenaline is released into the body. The safety that is threatened can be physical or mental. A perception of danger or a threat to our emotional safety releases adrenaline into the body just the same as a physical threat would. If, for any reason, our perception of unsafe circumstances is continual, the uninterrupted flow of adrenaline into our system, overtime, may create a breakdown in our bodies' natural tendency to sustain a homeostatic state. It is the taxing of the body that creates an environment for illness, injury and disease.

On the other hand, just as our perception can release adrenaline, it can also release endorphins into our system and create an entirely different physiological and emotional state. Endorphins are the body's natural pain-reducers and affect emotions that enhance our sense of well-being. Making the jump from stress as a detriment to stress as a guide to a balanced lifestyle becomes easy when the understanding that we have control over our perceptions is acknowledged and embraced. Stress is born out of a belief system we ourselves define, establish and sustain through our choices. By listening to stress signals and using them as opportunities to review our beliefs and values, we can create a foundation of response skills that support a harmonious and balanced lifestyle.

Stress becomes a guide for awareness and clarity around our thoughts, emotions and actions. It is something that will always exist and has the unique purpose of challenging us to expand our

perceptions and consciousness. It is from a place of awareness and expansion that stress becomes a positive influence on the choices we make and contributes to a balanced and harmonious lifestyle. By using stress to integrate supportive and life-affirming beliefs and values, stress ceases to be a life-threatening state of being and becomes a valuable tool in living from a place of personal peace and enrichment.

Karen S. Danner is currently teaching Mindfulness and Stress at ASU. She is the Founder, CEO and Creative Director of Love Yourself Well, a wellness education and promotion company specializing in individual wellness, corporate wellness education and wellness training and development. Karen's book "Life Moves" is available at www.loveyourselfwell.com.