

Work in Progress

Published monthly by Michele Crawford

Work in Progress is an electronic newsletter intended to assist individuals seeking optimum well-being.

www.michelecrawford.ca

www.willowhousewellness.com

E-mail to michelecrawford@dccnet.com

~~~~~

Work in Progress December 2006 Volume I Issue X

Feature Article: Understanding Stress! The Physical and Emotional Components that Create Strain and Tension in our Lives. Part Five.

~~~~~

Please feel free to forward a copy of Work in Progress (in its entirety) to friends, co-workers, or anyone interested in personal development.

For Subscribe or Unsubscribe instructions, please go to bottom of this ezine.

~~~~~

In this Issue:

~~~~~

- 1) Note from Michele
- 2) Feature Article
- 3) About Michele
- 4) Counselling Services

~~~~~

1) Note from Michele

~~~~~

Dear Reader

Here is the final part of the Stress Management series. Some suggestions follow for alleviating stress and tension in our lives. All are based on researched success and some may even appear to be too simplistic to be helpful. But therein lies their beauty: uncomplicated and very powerful in their usefulness.

~~~~~

2) Feature Article Understanding Stress! The Physical and Emotional Components that Create Strain and Tension in our Lives. Part Five.

~~~~~

SUMMARY

I hope my definition of stress has clarified your need to place a greater emphasis on your "*problems inside*" than on your "*problems outside*" if you want to live a more stress-free life. In other words, your interpretation of outside problems significantly influences your stress levels, which include both emotional and physical health.

STRESS REDUCTION TIPS

1. Breathe! Breathing due to anxiety takes place in the chest, not the diaphragm. Practice breathing deliberately from your belly, expanding the diaphragm in small stages, filling your lungs slowly. Then just as slowly, breathe out a little at a time, saying to yourself "letting go, letting go" Remember to breathe while pushing out your belly and practice this way of breathing until it becomes habitual. **This is a very powerful way to normalize an arousal state, especially at a neurological level.**
2. Practice Mindfulness. Paying detailed attention to every task, such as all sensations of watering a plant, is called mindfulness. Throughout your day, remind yourself to focus on your 5 senses (smell, sound, sight, taste and touch - which include the entire range of your skin). Ask yourself: "Am I in my body now?" (e.g.: What am I *smelling*? Can I *feel* the breeze on my face? Am I actually *looking* at that tree? Can I *feel* the ground under my feet? Am I *hearing* that bird's song or the wind in the trees?) Continually run your mind's focus from your feet up to your head, noticing all sensations in your body as you do so. Again, the more you work at this, the more **you will notice its relaxing and energizing power.**

Another aspect of mindfulness is to **stay in the moment** versus stewing about the past, worrying about the future, or fretting about what other people think. Being in the moment allows you to always notice **something** wonderful and with practice, your happiness levels will grow.

3. Accept Reality. **Avoid using the words SHOULD or MUST.** Whenever you say these words, not only are you denying reality, you stay STUCK in the incident instead of focusing on your recovery. Using the language of 'should' or 'must' keeps your concentration on what you cannot control - the event, rather than on what you can control - your reaction. Try replacing the

word "should" or "must" with "would be better" or "I would have preferred" or "given the reality this has happened, how I want to feel?"... "How do I want to react?"

4. Engage in Physical Activity. Walking (and other bi-lateral movement like swimming, cycling, and jogging), **is a proven way to alleviate stress reactions** and especially, soothe depression. Recent research demonstrates exercise significantly more effective than anti-depressant medication for alleviating depression! Purchase a rebounder and try to bounce a few moments throughout the day. Also, when a person is in a chronic state of arousal, his or her leg muscles tighten, causing back, neck, shoulder and head pain. Sit in a chair and rotate your pelvis in big circles and you will notice your leg muscles relax. This starts a chain reaction of relaxing other muscles, like your back, neck and shoulders. Yawn in an exaggerated way to relax jaw muscles. Slowly rolling your eyes in huge circles reduces stress levels as well.
5. Eat Well. **Moods are directly linked to food intake**. When stressed, the release of adrenaline in your stomach creates a feeling of nausea. When nauseated, you tend to eat poorly. Unfortunately, a poor diet negatively affects emotions and around the cycle continues. Research has linked certain foods and additives with interfering in the body's natural healing mechanisms. Examples include sugar, caffeine, aspartame and MSG.

On the other end of the food intake continuum, sugar will artificially alter moods by creating a rush of blood sugar. Certain foods can have an association with comfort and unfortunately, these foods usually are unhealthy and mask your true issues.

6. Be Optimistic. No matter what happens, your inner dialogue can be *pessimistic, idealistic or optimistic*. *Pessimistic* beliefs are grounded in negativity, making reality appear so much worse than it is. *Idealistic* beliefs are based on how things *should* be and generate anger and depression when reality doesn't reflect these expectations.

Optimism always starts with reality and then focuses on the positive aspects of reality. This is the concept of glass-half-full thinking that lends itself to more contentment with life.

Optimistic people frequently recognize that the worst things that happen can lead to the greatest meaning and gifts in life.

Acknowledging what has happened and then focusing on the good that could come from it always promotes adaptation to life's stressors. **Research teaches us that optimistic people are generally healthier, live longer, have more satisfying relationships and appreciate life more.**

7. Humour. The ability to be able to think of your life as your own personal soap opera is both recommended and highly freeing. **Whenever you laugh**, (even better, cultivate the talent to belly laugh), **you feel lighter and empowered**. Think of all the events in your life that stressed your nerves in the moment and then later, in retelling the story, you were able to laugh about it. In that feeling of levity, you felt stronger and more in control.
8. Cultivate an Awareness of Energy. For five thousand years, alternate healing has understood that all matter is energy. Quantum Physics formally proved this law in the 1950's. We react to energy at a level under our conscious awareness. Imagine a snapping aggressive dog whose lead is being held by a person who is in a state of anger. Hand his leash to a calm person, and immediately, miraculously, the dog settles down and is very quiet and still.

We notice that dogs, like all animals, react to energy. But energy does have the same affect on people. **Negative energy vibrates through our electric-magnetic system but then, so does positive energy**. So much needs to be learned about the phenomenon of energy's impact on our body, health and happiness.

9. Neuro-Peptides. In 1993, a brain scientist, Candace Pert, isolated a bio-chemical connector between the brain and the immune system. **She essentially discovered that out thoughts, positive, negative or neutral, essentially travel through the body on these connectors**. That laid the groundwork for understanding those times when we explain our symptoms (aches and pains) to a doctor and his or her diagnosis is stress; when nothing else is evidently wrong.

Since that discovery, hundreds of these chemicals, called neuro-peptides, have been identified and each has a distinct function.

Some, generated by irrational beliefs, are quite deadly. I highly recommend the docudrama film What the Bleep Do We Know? as an excellent source of the experience of energy on our wellness as well as explaining neuro-peptides. It is one of those movies that has the capacity to change your life.

For more information, please contact:
Michele Crawford RCC CCC at
E-mail: michelecrawford@dccnet.com or
Phone: 604-515-9727
Web Site: www.michelecrawford.ca

~~~~~  
3) About Michele  
~~~~~

Michele Crawford is a therapist who assists individuals who are struggling with trauma, anxiety or depression. Her passion for her work remains embedded in being able to connect with you in your suffering, helping you find real solutions no matter how complex the issue may be.

~~~~~  
4) Counselling Services  
~~~~~

Are you prepared to live with more happiness, optimism, confidence, self-worth and hope? If your answer is "yes," then your next step is to contact me for a free 20-minute phone consultation. We can then discuss how I might best help you resolve your problems of Trauma, Depression and Anxiety.

The benefits of counselling with Michele include: significantly reduced stress levels, an optimistic outlook in life, increased confidence and hope.

~~~~~  
**Privacy Policy**  
~~~~~

I want to reassure you that your e-mail address will never be shared or sold to anyone else.

~~~~~  
**Pass It Along**

~~~~~

Please feel free to forward a copy of Work in Progress (in its entirety) to friends, co-workers, or anyone interested in personal development. Copyright Michele Crawford 2006 All Rights Reserved.

Michele Crawford RCC CCC
Willow House Wellness Ltd.
Web Site: www.michelecrawford.ca
E-mail: michelecrawford@dccnet.com
Phone: 604-515-9727
Fax: 604-515-9728