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Conversations with self-20

Coping with stress

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Here are three simple ways to relieve stress

Whenever I experience physical discomfort, emotional pain or a fidgety mind, I ask myself what makes me feel this way? I put it down to stress.

I have been combating these feelings, of late, and have recognised there are three ways to cope:

1. By telling the truth: Here I mean, 'simply saying what is.' It has nothing to do with morality. Not telling the truth induces stress. This stress includes the energy required for lying, the need to remember the lie, the concern over being caught, the worry that someone will reveal the lie, the tension of facing someone who knows I am lying, and the conflict with my moral or religious beliefs. When I reveal 'what is,' I am aware and honest. Thus my tension is less.

2. By having better self-regard: If I have low self-regard, I feel a lot of tension. I may be concerned that I am being ignored or that I will be discovered as being incompetent, perhaps considered a phony. I may fear being rejected, disliked or saying something wrong or not speaking up when I should, or that I have failed to be loyal. The worse the perception of myself, the more my life will be filled with stress relating to the anticipation of being ignored, humiliated or rejected.

3. By exercising choice: Failure to understand self-responsibility or choice also leads to stress. If I feel I am responsible for everyone around me, I quickly reach a burnout. Clearly understanding, therefore, where responsibility lies in each situation is one of the surest ways to reduce stress. Choice implies that I choose to feel pressure or stress. There is nothing inherent in my life situation that requires me to feel pressure. I choose to interpret what I experience as stress. I am the one who labels a situation as stressful. Nothing is stressful to me unless I interpret it as stressful.

To sum up, truth is a great simplifier of personal and interpersonal difficulties; self-regard helps me understand respect and like myself; and by exercising choice I empower myself when I accept responsibility for myself.

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