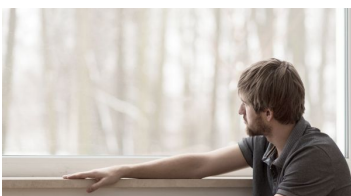




Stress Tips for this New World of COVID-19



Last month when I published my article with tips for working from home ([click here to read](#)), I had a number of replies and I always ask you, my readers, for suggestions. Here's what I received from Joyce Haussermann, Capital Coordinator, Business Planning at Charter Communications (credited here with her permission):

"The big thing we are dealing with today is stress and how to handle it. It's an inside job [referring to my webinar on dealing with stress] but with all the uncertainty today and people losing their jobs it's really hard. We are all wondering if and when we are going to get our next paycheck and how we are going to pay our bills."

In response, I have contemplated what I could share that would be useful, not simple platitudes and would be heard as heartfelt as I intend. What is offered below is a collaboration between myself and Joyce Haussermann. We hope you find things here that are helpful.



God grant me
SERENITY
to accept things
I cannot change
COURAGE
to change the
things I can and
WISDOM
to know the difference

**Stress
Process
Model**
Changing the Cycle

What makes the difference in how people react to the same stress?

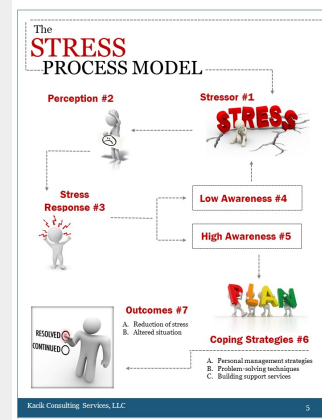
With reference to my program on stress, “It’s an Inside Job” the title refers to the foundation of the body of knowledge around stress. All of our stress comes from how we think. OK, if I haven’t lost you with that statement, let me explain. There is a process our brain goes through, which is first to interpret each thing that presents itself. Our brain processes are based on our perceptions, which are formed through the way we were raised, how we have learned, our experiences and our conscious choice of thought as well. Our brain can perceive that something is of no threat and we can decide how to react. Our brain can also interpret something as a threat, in which case our “Fight or Flight” reaction kicks in. Have you ever noticed how differently some people deal with stressful situations? Yes, some hold their emotions in and others express them quietly or loudly or sometimes inappropriately.

Some people are calm and moving forward without fear or worry while others are falling apart either on the inside or the outside or both and seemingly even paralyzed with fear.

What makes the difference in how people react to the same stress?

The difference is in our perception and our awareness of our self-talk. We can slow down long enough to figure out what our subconscious self-talk is saying to our brain and then challenge that thinking and decide to think differently. If we have a low-awareness of our self-talk, we just go in circles with our stress reactions. But if we have a high-awareness or take the time to examine what we are saying to ourselves, and challenge our thinking, we can make conscious choices to change how we think as well as our self-talk. Then we can change our stress level and possibly the outcome of the situation. (See the downloadable “Stress Process Model” in the sidebar and read an example of changing one’s self-talk in the sidebar, or if you are reading on your phone, at the bottom.)

We can learn to choose our self-talk and our reactions, especially when we are stressing about something over



[Downloadable PDF of the Stress Process Model](#)

Addressing your stress begins with being aware of how you react to situations and recognizing what your coping mechanisms are. Do those mechanisms produce the results you really want? If not, then build strategies to get you the outcome you want.

The stress process model above is a tool to remind you that your awareness will either keep you caught in a cycle of stress or resolve it.

Changing Self-Talk

Reframing your situation

An example of being aware of your negative self-talk in order to challenge it and replace it with more positive self-talk to reduce your stress.

The negative self-talk:

which we have no control.

Let me be very clear here. The potential negative impacts of COVID-19 in our lives, our finances and even for our very life are indeed serious and I do not take that lightly. I also understand some of you are worried about having a job, having a paycheck and being able to pay your bills. Some of you are worried about losing your car or even your home. Some of you cannot see loved ones, who may themselves be in poor health or perhaps even on a respirator with this deadly virus. So I minimize none of those concerns.

1. Do what you can to prepare for possibilities

If you worry about it, then decide what is within your control and what you can do to prepare. Then do it. If it's not something you can do yet, then at least create your list of options and what you may be able to do at a later date. You will sleep better knowing you have done what you can.

2. Let go of what you cannot control

Once you have prepared for what you can or created contingency plans for the "what ifs", then let go of what is going to happen. If you cannot control what will actually happen, then no amount of worry will change it. You will rob yourself of calm, the joy of living your life, and seeing and enjoying the good, that even during these times, we can find.

3. Be honest with yourself about your emotions

Reach out, talk with your friends and be real during this time. Let us help each other get up when we are down. I've done it. I cried on the phone last week with one of my friends. It helped. It's therapeutic. Let people help you! We are here to help each other.

4. Be watchful of what you allow your brain to ingest

Decide how much you can ingest of the news and social media before it impacts you in negative ways. Everyone's tolerance level is different. Know where the line is for you so you can stay positive. Take a break or limit your exposure if you need to. Facebook seems to have fewer personal posts and more political and

I have to work 8 hours a day from home with three kids running around so I'm not as efficient and my oldest child needs to complete 3-4 hours of home schooling, much of which requires the computer, and we only have one computer.

I can't do all this. I'm overwhelmed and so my work is suffering and my boss is liable to notice and I worry I'll lose my job. My child isn't getting all her homework done and that's going to affect her education and she'll be behind when she does go back to school.

I can't do it all and I'm exhausted and what if I lose my job and we can't pay our bills. This is awful and it's getting worse and I have no control over it.

Some alternative, more positive self-talk:

Thankfully, I'm able to work from home and still collect a paycheck. I know some of my colleagues have kids too and I'm sure we're all challenged by the new demands. Maybe we could all share some ideas on a staff call to help each other and figure out ways to get our own work done more efficiently and still

COVID-19 information and news right now. Scroll past if you need to and look for the positive posts. With all the bad news these days, post positive or funny things to balance and encourage others and give them the break they need. Be the difference.

5. Take stock of your finances

While incomes may be slashed right now, so too can your spending. Rather than worry, sit down with a calculator and a pen or laptop and figure out where you really stand. Then you can problem-solve if need be and take what actions you can. Be brutal with your budget and figure out what you can cut and what you can do without. Stop excessive spending especially online because you are bored – only purchase what you absolutely need for the time being. Sometimes it's good to add some perspective about our way of life and think about what some folks live without every day. You may not be able to cut anything. You may already be living with the bare minimum and if you are, don't be afraid to ask others for help.

If you are fortunate enough to have extra, now might be a time to consider the perspective of needs vs. wants and whether you might choose to share what extra you have to ease someone else's genuine fear because they cannot cover the cost of basic needs right now. There are lots of community organizations and churches who are vetting those needs and who need contributions.

6. Learn what financial help is available

- Many mortgage companies are “freezing” mortgages for now
- Many auto loan companies are doing the same
- Local food shelves and food banks are there to help. I am a volunteer with our local food shelf. I worked with them as a consultant and we started with their Vision, Mission and Core Values. It was important to them to include in their core values to provide service and help without judgment! Know that those who work at food shelves generally know all the stories and they know that appearances are deceiving. So please don't judge yourself or others in need and don't be afraid to ask for help. Some day, when you're back on your feet, you can give back or pay it forward.

support our kids. I'm not the only one who is trying to figure it out. We can help each other.

My daughter is trying to do her homework and we only have one computer. I'm sure other families have similar challenges. Some families may only have one computer with more than one child trying to use it to do homework. I could talk with her teacher to let her know we're trying our best so she's aware of our circumstances. I'm sure I'm not the only one. Maybe it will help her with the types of assignments she gives and maybe she'll have suggestions or alternative assignments she's offering for kids who don't have computers or internet that we could use too. There are lots of ways to learn besides using the computer. Plus, once the kids get back to school, I'm sure they'll work at making sure everyone gets back on the same page and back up to speed. These are unusual circumstances and I'm not a trained teacher. I need to collaborate with her teacher and we can help each other figure it out.

It's all about helping each other figure it out right now so I need not try to figure everything

- Many utility companies are offering either help or an agreement not to turn off your utility during these times
- Your church or other organization may be able to help
- You may be eligible for unemployment – even for self-employed business people
- You may be eligible for government loans
- You may be eligible for government subsidy payments
- If there are bills you cannot pay, contact the vendor and explain your circumstance. Many are offering to postpone or freeze payments or offering help of some other nature. You won't know if you don't ask.

When you hear of things that can help folks financially, share the information. Help others find answers you've found.

7. Whatever your needs, fears or concerns, problem-solve with the help of others

Whatever you may be stuck stressing about or worrying about, ask others for help. People come up with all kinds of ideas that you might not have thought of.

8. Address your boredom

Our society has become so busy, with so much of our lives ruled by media and electronics. Now is a great time to slow down and find enjoyment in simple things our parents and ancestors knew that we have lost; a walk in the woods, listening to the birds and identifying different kinds, playing games as a family, sharing stories with one another, making things from scratch, trying new recipes, etc. What are the things of which you've previously said, "I would love to, if only I had time..." Now might be the time.

9. Isolate physically, but not socially

If you don't have a virtual platform of any kind, I use Zoom Pro for my business and they also have a free Zoom account which allows you to do meetings of up to 100 people for 40 minutes. There are other platforms out there as well. Get together with friends and family

out by myself. I'll reach out for help and suggestions. This will work out and it's all going to be ok. No one can ask more of me than my best. I'm giving it my best and I need to go to sleep every night knowing I did my best and that's all that counts.



Speaking Topics & Virtual Training

Is your organization looking for a professional development speaker or trainer, a webinar or a workshop?

I design team and leadership development training workshops and virtual training, talks and webinars.

Here are a few of my most popular topics:

Handle Difficult Conversations with Confidence

Quick-Start Your New Leadership Role: Position Yourself for Success

Managing People Through a Change Process

Be a Strategic Thinker

Stress is an Inside Job!

virtually. It will help to see faces and talk even when you cannot be together. Face Time is another option. Share time with friends, family and colleagues. We all need each other.

10. Be there to offer support when someone is having a rough time but don't let other people's feelings / fears stress you out, and don't feed off someone else's fears and emotions.

There are still lots of ways you can help others right now. Send an encouraging email, offer to be a listening ear, make a phone call to someone, plan a silly virtual get-together to lift spirits, pick up groceries for an older person, check-in on people who live alone. It's lonely enough right now and living alone is an even bigger challenge. Getting a phone call and hearing a live voice can be a huge boost. Be open to ways you can encourage and support others.

You need not go into "me too" mode in commiserating with someone else to be empathetic. You can respond by saying something like, "I hear this is really hard for you right now and things are really getting to you today. We all have ups and downs with this situation, and I try to stay positive as much as I can. I'm sorry today is especially challenging for you. How can I help you?" There may not be any way you can help, but just this gentle nudge might alert them that you are not in the same place and that they aren't just going to get you to join in on talking about how bad everything is.

This is a challenging time, but we can walk away with valuable lessons.

My best to you and yours,



Click below to schedule time with me.

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- Do It Skillfully!**

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**Results Leadership
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Your Manager**

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