

Releasing Stressful Thoughts aka "Transforming Toxic Thoughts"

RELEASING STRESSFUL THOUGHTS:

1. What is it like when the mind is full of stressful thoughts? How do you treat others? How do you treat yourself? (GROUP DISCUSSION)

- * life slows down
- * not energized
- * momentum stops
- * don't want to participate in life
- * lose ability to be objective
- * go unconscious
- * can't access intuition
- * feels like I'm trying to swim upstream
- * world feels unfriendly
- * I look for the negative
- * I want to stay in bed and pull covers over me.
- * I want to hide under a rock
- * not present
- * very irritable
- * tense
- * not in conscious choice
- * snap at others
- * not there for others
- * don't really listen
- * want to eat something crunchy (aka - not healthy)
- * don't care about self
- * very hard on self
- * self-critical
- * berate
- * overwhelming
- * Stressful
- * tiring
- * lack of creativity
- * draining
- * reality starts changing to align with the stressful thoughts
- * don't connect so much
- * feel deflated
- * Impatient
- * stress-filled/frustrated
- * anxious
- * mistakes happen
- * body tight
- * health issues - ulcers, heart problems
- * suffering
- * sabotage
- * draining/exhausting
- * interferes with power to focus/distracting
- * shut down/closed
- * mean/harsh to others
- * judgmental to self
- * pessimistic

2. What is life like in the absence of stressful thoughts? (GROUP DISCUSSION)

- * easier to relax
- * space open up for the Universe to support me
- * world feels friendly
- * energy is free
- * things come to me naturally
- * productive
- * flowing
- * peaceful
- * joyful
- * hopeful
- * graceful
- * grateful
- * RELAXED
- * freedom

- * nurtured
- * ease
- * connection
- * a sense of well-being
- * present
- * clarity
- * fulfilling
- * whole/free
- * easier
- * powerful
- * tap intuition
- * generous
- * loving/kind
- * encouraging/acknowledging
- ***Growth
- ***Internal/emotional freedom

3. What are examples of stressful thoughts? (GROUP DISCUSSION)

- * It's hard to interact with others
- * What if they don't like me?
- * What if I don't say it right?
- * They won't or don't understand me.
- **** I'm not enough.
- * Money is the root of all evil.
- * People are selfish.
- * I'm going to lose everything.
- * I'm a failure.
- * I'm going to be late.
- * I'm going to let people down.
- * I'm not doing what I'm suppose to do.
- * I don't know what I'm suppose to be

- doing.
- * I'm not reaching my potential.
- * I don't have enough time.
- * It can't all be done.
- * I'm a bad person.
- * There's something wrong with me.
- * I can't handle it.
- * There's not enough time.
- * I have to do it all.
- * I shouldn't be judging.
- * Any judgmental thought.
- * I'm a big mess.

TWO ELEMENTS OF STRESSFUL THOUGHTS.

- * attachment
- * resistance

Attachment to Thought + RESISTANCE = Stress and Suffering

* a stressful thought does not always create suffering. A thought by itself is harmless. Most thoughts come into and out of our minds like clouds. 59,000 to 89,000 per day.

The world is coming to an end on Saturday (MUST believe)
It's cold outside.
That person is rude.

- judgments
- Think something should/shouldn't happen
- time
- Beliefs about can/can't do something
- SHOULD
- I need to
- I want _____

Future thoughts

- I may fail in my business
- The airplane is going to crash
- I'm going to look stupid
- I'm never going to amount to anything
- I can't handle what's coming

* Worrying is the practice of attaching to future thoughts WITH resistance. This results in fear, anxiety and stress. We don't know what is going to be true in reality until it happens. How can it help to attach to a future thought that only induces fear, anxiety and doubt?

Past Thoughts

- I should've gotten up earlier
- John shouldn't have yelled at me
- Lisa should've responded by now
- I shouldn't have reacted

We can't change the past. It is what it is. We can learn. We can make requests. When we're not resisting the past, we free energy up to live fulfilling lives now.

Present Thoughts

- Joe should be nice to me right now....and he isn't.
- They shouldn't be judging me...and they are.
- It shouldn't be cold outside...and it is.
- I should be doing something else. In any moment, you have the choice to do something else. Believe that you don't have the power to act differently is being a victim to the moment.
- I don't want to do the dishes, but I would like them done. If you WANT the dishes done, then do them.

How do we know a stressful thought is lurking? (GROUP DISCUSSION)

- argumentative
- body feels discomforting
- negative feelings and emotions
- not engaged
- not productive
- the thought is on loud speakers in my mind
- tension in the body
- racing a million miles per hour
- STRIVING
- AVOIDING
- circling thoughts
- Body tight/tense - stop breathing
- What is the tone of your voice?
- Are you open and connected, or closed and constricted?
- Is there a sense of nervousness?
- Are you off balance?
- Are you at peace?
- Reactions and Resistance
 - * pay attention to the clues - and get CURIOUS about the underlying thoughts

Stressful Thoughts Are Like Cholesterol

- When arteries are clear and clean - you are healthy. the body can do its job optimally.
- When cholesterol build in system, not noticeable in the beginning -- creates resistance in the arteries...making it harder for your heart to work.
- Cholesterol is like stressful thoughts in our minds -- impeding the flow of life.
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Recognizing truth and accepting reality are the two biggest keys in taking a stressful thought -- and unplugging from it.

7 Simple Strategies for Releasing Stressful Thoughts

- 1) Just release it.
- 2) Redirect focus - What's great about this?
- 3) Get present - (NOW Practices)
- 4) Quiet the Mind - without thought, there is no reaction, no emotional turmoil, no resistance to reality. If you meditate -- it can become easier and easier to find peace in any moment.
- 5) Question the truth of the thought. Is the thought really based in reality -- or "made up" (friend doesn't acknowledge the gift -- they aren't appreciative -- but they are grateful, even though it wasn't expressed).
- 6) Write down your stressful thoughts. Contain them.
- 7) Inquiry. Combines all the elements above - but great when it feels impossible to release them.

INQUIRY

* a way of investigating our thoughts. Loosening the grip. I like to think of inquiry as the serious surgery -- going in and investigating the thoughts that we may be obsessed with. Starts with awareness...the thought may not be obvious. There is a GIFT behind each thought.

Judge Your Neighbor Worksheet.

4 Questions and the Turnaround.

1. Is it true?
2. Is it absolutely true?
3. How do I react when I think that thought?
4. Who would I be without that thought?

Turnarounds.

What is "the work"? Byron Katie has a simple process called Inquiry, which is four simple questions and a turnaround. This is a method for investigating thoughts, particularly the stressful thoughts.

Why do "the work"??

- * great tool to access peace, ease and freedom
- * get the unproductive thoughts out of my head
- * move out of stress (or pain, or suffering, or irritation, or frustration, or ??)
- * finding the "no thought" space
- * reconnect to your most powerful Self
- * evolve out of a holding pattern
- * learn more about yourself - self-discovery -- seeing the hidden parts of yourself that you haven't owned.
- * bring to a peaceful place to make powerful choices

When should one do "the work"?

- * anytime you REACT, are activated with someone, in judgment, not at peace, caught up in your "stuff"
- * whenever we're RESISTING, it's a great time to get curious and do "the work"

PRINCIPLES - Re-read Lesson #8 & #9 in *The Power of Inner Choice for more about INQUIRY*

- * You can do "the work" on ANY thought you have resistance or attachment to.
- * Fighting reality is stressful.
- * Stressful thoughts are like cholesterol.
- * When we attach to thoughts, even true ones, there is suffering and stress
- * Attachment to Thought + RESISTANCE = Stress and Suffering
- * What is true in reality is what SHOULD be.
- * In the absence of stressful thoughts -- is peace.
- * Look for the thoughts under the thoughts.
- * Live the turnarounds.
- * Recognizing truth and accepting reality are the two biggest keys in taking a stressful thought -- and unplugging from it.
- * "The Work" is a process that allows each individual to discover their own deeper truth.
- * To the extent, I can peacefully "be with" ANY thought I am free. To the extent, there is a reaction in me (even a tiny one), I still have work to do on my path to wholeness.

Another useful tool. I'm attached to a thought: *"Anthony should be 'on time.'"*

AND THAT MEANS THAT: *(looking for thoughts associated with the original thought)*

- *something is wrong*
- *I'm out of control*
- *Anthony doesn't value my time*
- *Anthony doesn't respect me*
- *there is something to fear*

Each of these thoughts creates an opportunity to do INQUIRY also.

HOMEWORK:

1. OBSERVE your thoughts this week. Simply watch them without judgment. Notice them coming and going without resistance.
2. Identify the 5 most stressful thoughts and apply one of the 7 keys above.
3. Complete a Judge Your Neighbor Worksheet on someone who irritates you, frustrates you or angers you. and apply the process of INQUIRY to your worksheet.

BONUS: Listen to the 3 interviews I did with Byron Katie in my "Conversations with the Masters" series.

<http://www.lifecoachmary.com/byronkatie1.htm>

<http://www.lifecoachmary.com/byronkatie.htm>

<http://www.lifecoachmary.com/byronkatie2.htm>