

Chapter Three

Quick Thinking &

Faster Mastery of Stress & Moods

You may have less need for more explanations and evidence supporting what **Stress and Moods Mastery** says than relief that begins right away. The Spoken Content I just reviewed with you and this chapter offer shortcuts.



Decisive Milepost

Take advantage of what's true and new that this chapter provides and you pass an all-important milepost on your way to health and happiness. More than any other, it gives opportunities to speed-up your progress. However, it does so by exposing the most stubborn lies we're told about stress and its moods. How come?

When you want to get to "Best Wellness" soon enough to protect yourself, it's essential to know which signs to ignore. Misdirecting signs are politically correct and deeply ingrained untruths.

- What happens after spending our lives having parents, media personalities, magazine article writers, experts, politicians, bureaucrats and others tell us what they and we don't realize are untruths?

Indispensable facts are so different that at first they sound like the biggest lies of all. When you refuse to wait for relief and secure futures for people who depend on you—hoping other folks will tell you the facts required—please shift to the Protective part of you.

Now, you will tell yourself the truth.

- **Stress and Moods Mastery** tells enough of the facts, politically incorrect truth, that you'll find nowhere else. It tells, for example, "It isn't people, your surroundings, current events, heredity and memories that makes you feel – cause moods or emotions. What truly makes your feelings and stress absolutely isn't your fault!"

Because what this chapter says is particularly different and we humans understandably respond with strong denial, you may have two reactions to get over:

1. **"It isn't true."** Once you begin to believe this chapter tells the truth, you might realize you're feeling some irritation or anger and have the second response.
2. **"It isn't new."** You can readily overcome that usual reaction. Do that by telling yourself the truth: This program takes a clinical experience-based approach. Unlike any other, it uses parts of popular theories* to help explain discoveries gained from decades of uncommon healthcare practice. No one can accurately make comments such as, "I've seen something that takes the same or very similar approach." "This is just a theory." "It won't work for me." The equally inaccurate, "This can't work in the real world."

* Loosely framed in Eric Berne's transactional analysis or TA, cognitive-behavior, learning, gestalt and systems theories.

After doing something often for months and then years, it becomes a habit or like one. You do it without needing to think so much about it, consciously. If you drive, for instance, you now do it that way.

What if a behavior became like a habit twenty, thirty or more years ago . . . when you were a youngster? Isn't it probable that you would by now forget learning that behavior and pay hardly any attention to it? When that behavior is a thought, understandably, you now doubt that you have it at all. This happens with many thoughts. They become automatic.

My point? You are—without realizing it or meaning to—having untrue automatic notions that control your confidence in ways that hurt you. Because they harm you, those unrealized misunderstandings hurtfully influence the futures of people you care about or will someday. (Explained at the end of this chapter.)

By getting so you better sense the presence of hurtful, unknown-to-you STRESS Notions, you will counter and sufficiently weaken them. You just need to do that enough rather than entirely. Decades of doing this work convince me that when you offset them with Confidence-Freeing Facts, inspired by your CARING Answers, you will get and stay sufficiently free of unhealthy stress and moods. Confidence-Freeing Facts are your self esteem-cleaning, accurate, free of mixed meanings and negative words, counters to STRESS Notions.



Why not everyone? Why later?

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If STRESS Notions make and keep people seriously unhealthy and unhappy, why isn't everyone suffering? Why do many people hurt later in their lives and not early on? Every child learns and forgets learning the notions that damage the accuracy of her or his self-confidence. Yet, one-third of adults apparently don't yet have this happiness and health risking problem. A combination of four answers:

1. Those adults with little or much less persistent stress and its emotions have less sensitivity to the "politically correct untruths" used by influence and money-motivated experts and organizations to sabotage personal confidence or self-esteem.
2. Some people grow up in homes and communities where there's less acceptance of STRESS Notions.
3. By chance, they didn't buy into those honest mistake ideas as much as other youngsters did.
4. The most influential answer is that the part of their personalities that accepts those false notions was temporarily preoccupied with something else. Have you noticed, for instance, that grownups who believe they can no longer compete in sports or maybe attract lovers soon become obviously stressed and upset . . . probably depressed?

Health and Happiness Saving Inventory

Identify which of the following traits are probably true of a youngster. Notice I didn't say that someone older wouldn't have them as characteristics. It's just that they would be more typical of young folks.

Put an X in the spaces beside those traits typical of youngsters. Please go ahead and do that now.

- _____ Doesn't care whether or not he or she is outstanding or does the opposite and plays at (focuses on) being outstanding . . . perhaps pretending to be a super model or a famous sports personality.
- _____ Says things that aren't true to try and get his or her way.
- _____ Rebels and is quick to argue or hides under his bed when he believes someone is angry at him.
- _____ Cares about what he wants more than about the needs of other people.
- _____ Occasionally "likes" or even says he "loves" to do what can hurt him, such as "goofing off" in a busy street or road.
- _____ Becomes bored easily.
- _____ Seems too lazy to do for himself and expects others to do his chores or is "Mr. Independent" and insists on doing everything for himself.
- _____ Wants to postpone doing "stuff" she or he dislikes.
- _____ Blames even the family cat or dog for damage he caused or goes to the other extreme and believes nearly everything is his fault. For instance, the divorce of his parents.
- _____ Tries to escape discomfort even when it's temporary and clearly in her better interest. For instance, going to the dentist.
- _____ Give him an "inch" and sooner or later he will take a "mile."
- _____ Thinks of himself or herself as weak.
- _____ Has trouble distinguishing himself from other people or his surroundings. If he, for instance, lives in a "bad neighborhood" that somehow makes him "bad."
- _____ Pretends or tells himself that he has magical or super hero abilities.
- _____ Can regularly seem to be dumb when he isn't. He's young rather than dumb.
- _____ Is more interested in or drawn to fantasy than facts.
- _____ Resists as much as he can whatever he considers to be hard or difficult to do.
- _____ Is prone to frequently having "temper tantrums" or tries to be "Miss Sweetness 'n Light" (always good).
- _____ Doesn't take serious matters seriously.
- _____ Takes some of what grownups and others say to her as criticism when they intend it otherwise (not critical).
- _____ Is irate when his brother (sister) is getting more than he is . . . will loudly complain saying, "It's not fair!"
- _____ Regularly asks, "Why?"
- _____ When frightened, she will blame ghosts, imaginary monsters in her bedroom closet, etc. Will say something such as, "The monster scared me (made me feel frightened)," when it can only exist in her vivid imagination.
- _____ Dislikes making mistakes and believes he shouldn't make them or evidently doesn't care and ignores his errors.

Did you identify most of those traits as typical of youngsters? If so, that's a positive sign. You've moved enough into the Protective part of yourself. The terrific Little Parent notions portion of your personality wouldn't identify most of them that way.

The Truthful Answer

Did you ever wonder why you did something hurtful knowing what you knew?

- You understood that it damaged your health but you did it anyway.
- You did whatever knowing that it made you appear less intelligent than you are.
- You looked foolish doing it and realized that too.
- You understood that if you stopped doing whatever it was and gave in a little then it was just a matter of time before you did it again.

So, how come you did what encouraged stress and felt upset when you knew or suspected you could have "done better?" There is an answer. It explains the above more clearly than anything you've heard or seen. For years, when I've told adults this explanation and they understood it, their responses have nearly always been variations of, "Why didn't somebody else tell me that?" "It's so true, isn't it?" Once they understood this answer, they felt more well-deserved compassion for themselves. They had the confidence needed to safely be and remain sufficiently free of ongoing stress and its chronic moods. You will find the

answer below.

Professionals who study human personality understand that the personality of someone in her late teens and older has somewhat distinct parts or "ego-states." I identify them as:

1. The Child-like ego-state or "One-year-old."
2. The Little Parent ego-state or "Young and thinks it's grown."
3. The Adult-like ego-state or "Part that's protective."

- The Child-like ego-state is the clearly young collection of thoughts in the human personality.
- The Little Parent-like part is young—but not obviously so. It is in place by the age of four or five. Like the One-year-old, the Little Parent stays with us throughout our lives and doesn't get "older." It sees itself as already grown and thinks it already understands or will recognize what should help. It wants to help. Still, it only has the usual tools of a grown parent—such as rewarding, punishing, lecturing, praising, criticizing. It doesn't like to be reminded or admit that the futures of other folks are placed at risk because of what it does or doesn't do.
- The Adult-like ego-state cluster of beliefs takes longer to form because it results from schooling and years of experiences. Experience is the most important influence.

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Adults who have (will have) an ongoing problem with stress and its painful moods have — without meaning to or realizing it — their Little parent ego-states regularly in charge. That part often and mistakenly encourages them to do what enables making and keeping moderate and higher stress. Example: "Go ahead and drink that (excess alcohol); you've had a hard day. It'll help." Later, that same part seriously harms self-esteem by criticizing, threatening or punishing and does so just as inappropriately. What else would we expect? That ego-state is young and inexperienced.

STRESS Notions are quick interpretive thoughts and only a few of the collection of ideas that comprise the Little parent (Young and thinks it's grown) ego-state. When we're persistently stressed, it's because of those ideas. Without our awareness and intent, they strongly interfere with having and keeping enough confidence.

CARING Answers are just as quick and already reside in the Adult-like (Protective) ego-states of essentially all grownups. And when, with this program, they are put in control – CARING Answers can and will sufficiently counter STRESS Notions to release the required confidence that surely and lastingly relieves ongoing stress and its moods.

When you're less confident (feel less capable and well about yourself) or believe you are not doing what you should, it's because the part of your personality — which can less well handle what's going on — temporarily is in charge. Children and young ego-states AREN'T lazy, crazy, weak, mean or stupid. They are inexperienced; they honestly don't know better.

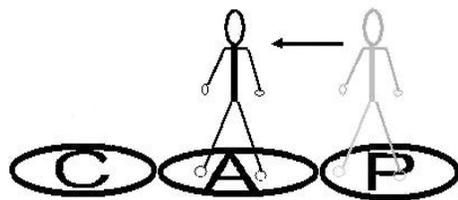
The statements you read in the **Health and Happiness Saving Inventory** are some traits of that part of your personality that was responsible for your unhealthy stress. To get free and stay free, the control needs to stay primarily with that Protective (Adult-like) part of your personality. **Assisting you to help yourself make and maintain that so-important shift in control is basically what this program is about.**

Please Avoid Doubts!!!

Only the Little Parent notions part of you would doubt that you have and have enough Adult-like beliefs ego-state. You have plenty of what it takes to give away enough of the destructive stress and keep it that way.

The Crucial Shifting Application

How can you apply all of this to getting and keeping relief? Regularly and seriously practice shifting into and staying in the Adult-like beliefs portion of your personality. Please move into your Protective ego-state that listens better, is most helpful solving problems, avoids feeling criticized, seeks out the facts and more easily understands and retains new information.



The Adult-like ego-state part of your personality is calm enough and readily corrects mistakes.

“Mistakes” Correcting

Last week I saw a segment on a news program that told about a twelve-year-old music prodigy. He already played several instruments. But what easily identified him as particularly outstanding was that he had already composed several significant musical pieces – five of which were full-length symphonies. Talented composers only write five or six symphonies during their lives.

When the television reporter asked the boy if he ever changed the music he wrote, he said that he never did. Probably most of us would think that meant he was even more of a musical genius.

That wasn't the case. One of the child's teachers explained that not identifying opportunities for improvement and then correcting his musical scores was evidence of inexperience. The teacher gave this example.

He showed the reporter a photocopy of a page of music written by one of the great geniuses of the musical world, Ludwig van Beethoven. The page was a mess. Because there were no pencils and erasers or white cover-up fluid, Beethoven had crossed through, changed and changed again most of his work.

What I took from that news report was further confirmation of this: The Adult-like beliefs portion of our personalities takes recognizing our mistakes as evidence of improvement. Correcting our mistakes changes them into valuable learning.

Two strategies that I highly recommend provide shortcuts to engaging your ample Adult-like beliefs. Those strategies assist you to shift and more readily clean confidence by helping undo two of the most common and hurtful **STRESS Notions**:

1. **"I just know" Notion.**
2. **"He/She/It makes me feel" Notion.**

We'll talk about those soon . . . in the next chapter.

Strategy One

Imagine you're surrounded by an exceedingly dense grove of trees. While it's still daylight, the limbs and leaves are so unusually thick it's nearly dark where you are.

You are on a path that's clearly marked and even if you doubt it your path will soon lead you out of the woods. There are dips and roots in the path. Limbs have fallen across it. Still, the woods are filled with delicate flowers and ferns and other interesting sights. There are also animals such as wild pigs (boars) that could attack.

Thankfully, you have a durable and powerful flashlight . . . with batteries and a bulb guaranteed to last you a lifetime. By keeping the beam of light trained on the path just ahead and near your feet, you're able to step over and around obstacles in your way. The boars are frightened seeing the light and run away so you never know they were there.

You get to enjoy the flowers, ferns and other wonderful sights and smells along the path. The more you keep your powerful light pointed near your feet, the safer, sooner and more easily you progress through the patch of darkened woods.

Occasionally, you shine your light behind you—back down the path. Sometimes, you shine it up the path—ahead of you. You do that only briefly to give yourself a sense of where you've been and where you're going. Most of the time you keep your flashlight steadily shining on the path near your feet. You are safe and you can enjoy the scenery.

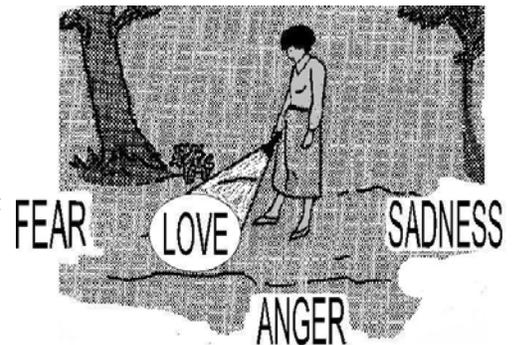
Sometimes you take out your compass and check it to be sure you're going in the direction of your choice. You are on the right path; you are doing very well.

Occasionally, others on paths near yours walk with you, but you don't depend on their lights. You enjoy their company while they are there but you understand their need to use their lights to benefit themselves.

This way of following your path in the woods illustrates living so you make it through seemingly “dark periods” of your life with more enjoyment and freedom from so much psychological stress . . . with more love and happiness. You also go with more satisfying, healthier relationships and as productively as possible.

Some folks go down their darkened paths shining their lights (**focusing their attentions**) too frequently on the path behind them (**the past**) or too far ahead of them (**the future**). They stumble (**have considerable stress and painful moods**) and miss much of the scenery (**pleasures of life**) along the way.

They sometimes turn off their lights (**take less responsibility for themselves**) expecting that others will look out for them and



shine their lights at their feet rather than taking care of themselves. They trip and fall and get upset with **(blame)** other folks and groups. They accuse individuals, groups, organizations and society of not being "fair." When not doing that, he or she shines his light at the feet of others who hopefully are shining their own appropriately. Consequently, those others have all the light and risk becoming too dependent on the help of others.

Perhaps you wonder, "Does this thing about shining my light behind me and further ahead mean I shouldn't think of the past or the future?"

What I mean is that it's in our best interest to spend relatively little time thinking of the past or future. When we focus our attention on the present, we realize that the "woods" have a way of seriously distorting what we see. What we view is only an approximation of what will be or has been. We get into serious trouble when we believe our memories of the past are accurate or when we think we can see the future. Guessing--even good guessing--isn't knowing what the future holds. Guessing isn't good enough.

There's nothing wrong with doing some occasional looking ahead to plan and set goals. The danger is in doing it too often. **It's necessary and not that difficult to distinguish planning from shining your light ahead to the future in an inappropriate way.** When you feel neutral-to-good, then you're planning. If you're thinking ahead and don't feel okay or better for doing it, you're not planning. **Life is far more than preparation for the "real thing." Right now is the real thing.**

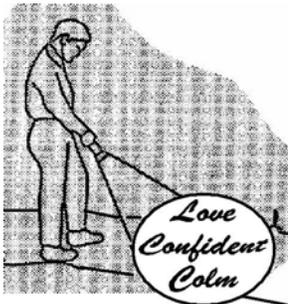
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"But I thought goal setting was supposed to be important. And here you're telling me not to do a lot of it. How come?" That's essentially what a former patient asked me. Having something you might call a "mission" to move toward and occasionally think about can give relief from stress in the present and does no harm. It can be helpful in other ways. It's like checking your compass in the woods. We'll talk more about having a mission in another chapter.

I counsel older adults who've taken focusing on the future to an extreme. They've spent years in jobs they hated – dreaming of the time they'd enjoy their retirement. When they retire, they realize that most of their lives have already passed with little joy or satisfaction. With so little practice, they discover they don't know how to be happy and satisfied in retirement. When thoughts of the future, or past, interfere with your significant awareness of what's going on in the present, much harm is done.

Benefit from this strategy by doing the following: Five, ten or more times a day--for at least a trial of a few days--pause and ask yourself, "Where might I be pointing my flashlight?" Think of yourself (imagine) walking along a dark but wonderful path in the woods. See or sense where you are shining the light. Is it pointed back behind you? Is it shining to the side of the path? Is it going up the path . . . fading into the darkness ahead of you? With practice, you'll do very well gauging this.

Important: Anytime you are feeling physical symptoms of stress or its emotional by-products, such as anxiety or sadness, and you tell yourself you have your light pointing near your feet and just ahead, you will know you're KIDding yourself. It's not true! The Little Parent portion of (cluster of young notions in) your personality is telling you a fib.



Now, imagine (continue to imagine for a minute or more) very purposefully moving so that your light is clearly focused just ahead of you and near your feet. It can help to accentuate what you're doing by actually holding your arm out, clasping an imaginary flashlight and pointing your hand in front and close to your feet.

Finally, see within the circle of light words such as "love," "confident," "calm."

A patient told me that soon after she began to practice the strategy just described, she had an interesting experience. She and her family owned and lived on a tobacco farm. One dark night she needed to go some distance from the house to get the pickup truck. Her husband had a "bad habit" of leaving the truck where he last used it – rather than bringing it back to the house at the end of the day.

With her flashlight in hand, she walked along the rough dirt road. She forced herself to keep the light just ahead of her and near her feet. At first she was afraid. She couldn't check to be sure there were no "ghosts" or "bugger-bears" out there. She laughed at herself and said, "I don't know what I thought I'd have done if there were ghosts or bugger-bears. I did make it to the truck without stumbling and getting off the road. It was a good lesson for me."

Keep your light at your feet and take those periods of your life and this program one sure step at a time. You can do it!

Reader, I'm sure that God alone walks the "darkened patches of path" really well.

But even God does that no more than 98% of the time. Being perfect, God has little if any need to always act perfectly. When we can "walk" our sometimes "gloomy paths" well 50% of the time, we're doing so perhaps three times better than we did before.

Strategy Two

Occasionally I tell people, "I've discovered you are from Mars." As sincerely as I can muster, I go on to tell them that I've been told that they were sent here to uncover Earth's weaknesses and to take those secrets back to their fellow Martians. Still further, in the process of spying on Earth they have destroyed countless innocent insects, mostly ants and beetles.

By this time, people I'm telling this to have a half-smile on their faces. When I ask them why they aren't upset with my calling them Martians, spies (stealing Earth's secrets) and murderers (killing ants and beetles), they typically begin with a superficial reason such as, "I didn't think you were serious." I then ask, "Would you be upset if you thought that I was serious--if I actually thought that you were from Mars?" Most people reply, "I wouldn't have been upset by that." Why not? They say, "Because it isn't true that I'm from Mars."

The point is – and this is particularly important – what you and I believe is true decides how much stress we have. That stress then creates our uncomfortable moods or emotions. The cause of our feelings and stress is inside us. We may often make comments such as,

- "He made me so angry."
- "The office was depressing (made me depressed)."
- "The ocean has a calming effect on me."
- "Johnny hurt my feelings."
- "She made me feel loved."
- "My job is so stressful."

But, they aren't true.

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When we think that someone or something determines how much stress we have, we're unaware of the facts. We're also denying our responsibility for our feelings or moods. Being responsible for stress and what we feel means we can change any emotion or mood that gets in our way. We can rid ourselves of the disabling and deadly physical by-products of our stress. After all, **self-responsibility makes possible self-control.**

What's your responsibility is entirely inside your "circle of light." That represents what you are or could be aware of and do something about. Again, "Once something is in your awareness, it's inside you and is yours."

In response to this essential and accurate information, someone said, "You tell me that situations, places and people don't make me feel anything or cause my stress; it's what I think is true or not true that decides those reactions. Then how come I feel stress and anger if someone calls me a bad name?"

If someone calls you a SOB and you don't yet know (down deep) you aren't one, then you are likely to be upset. Realize it or not, you believe you've been found out. (This is hurt hidden self-esteem.) Once you know you aren't a SOB, rather than being upset at being labeled one, you'll most likely wonder what the other person's problem is and why he or she is making such an error. You may be curious or even concerned for the name-caller . . . but, you won't be upset or stressed.

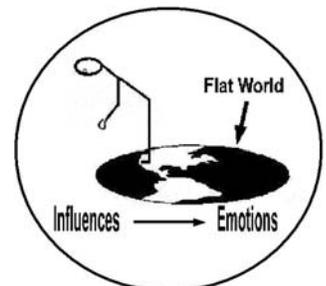
Am I saying we need to let people get away with saying anything they want to us, even calling us a SOB? If someone is upset and calls us SOB's or anything else or criticizes you, but you're genuinely confident and at ease, why would you want to retaliate? The other person is already at a considerable disadvantage. You're much better off than he or she is.

Besides, if you get upset when called a SOB or anything else – maybe a lazy bum, creep, nag, nerd or a witch – that powerfully implies you don't yet know you aren't what you've been called. Getting upset when accused, you're subtly giving the message that you think the accuser might be correct. I doubt you want to give that message.

Remember too, no one can make us think something and no one can make us feel something. What we think comes from our memories and our current interpretations of what is going on and has happened. You and I are the ultimate sources of what we think. Denying that responsibility means denying the reality of our considerable value and power.

You can understand why nearly everyone – five-hundred years ago – was convinced that the earth was basically flat . . . not flat like a ping-pong table, but flat. If you lived back then, you might have figured that if the earth was round or even oval, that round-enough rocks would constantly roll.

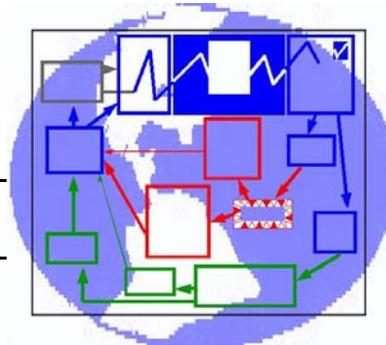
With that in mind, it's as easy to understand why we honestly but mistakenly believe that what are really "influences" somehow cause stress and consequently uncomfortable moods. What comes in between--our awareness, self-esteems, interpretive thoughts and imagined events--happen so fast they are invisible. They don't seem to be there and give the illusion of "flatness"-- of a direct link between influences and emotions.



The Earth is round (oval) and what seems to cause stress and its moods is actually part of a circle. The diagram we reviewed earlier clearly illustrates that circle. Saying or thinking that someone or something makes or causes our emotions is like saying, "the earth is flat." Understandably, it seems that way. However, it's an illusion.

Benefit from this second strategy by doing the following: As often as you will each day imagine the diagram to the right. Say to or remind yourself of something such as,

"Just as the world is round and seems otherwise, stress and moods happen because of a fault-free cycle inside me."



Perhaps you've said something such as,

- "But I wake up with backaches my doctor says come from stress. Surely, that can't be. I'm asleep . . . and can't be having stress while I'm asleep. Can I?"
- "My hands (or feet) get so cold at night."
- "The dentist tells me I'm grinding my teeth during sleep."



When describing the **Human Psychophysiological Process**, I noted that **STRESS Notions** occur in this part (see below) of a circular process. The notions are unknown and untrue.

Something important I didn't say: Those notions happen repeatedly even while you sleep. When untrue, they cause and keep the internal strain. So you have chronic moderate or more stress that's obvious or hidden.

Safeguarding People, Futures and Activities – Feeling Love Instead of Guilt

A participant in a weight-loss motivation workshop asked me, "You talk about protecting people we love or those who depend on us. Are you trying to get us to lose weight by making us feel guilty?" I've heard essentially that question more than once but only when working with groups.

I told her and the group that if they sometimes found themselves feeling uncomfortable and identified it as guilt, they could use that to their advantages. I said, "Good for you! Give yourself credit for being in touch with your emotions. Many adults feel guilty, sad, angry or frightened and don't know it."

Uncomfortable emotions can be unknown and fuel unhealthy behavior as much as known feelings do. It's a challenge for any of us to change what we are yet to suspect is there. Guilt is an emotion that very much needs to be reduced or eliminated.

Understand please, it's only the Little Parent element of your personality that encourages guilt. The Adult-like portion feels and shows love. And it is that part of you that gives away the stress so you won't find it. I'm definitely promoting that Adult-like and most protective part of you. That's the reason I make statements such as, "Protect the people you love or will love someday."

No Clue! No control! No Matter

"You don't have a damn clue!" Someone with a flushed face and budging eyes practically yelled that at me. I had told her that it wasn't true that having less control in someone's life increased his or her stress.

She further expressed her "fear with a mean face and voice" asking, "You've never been diagnosed with a life-threatening illness like cancer, have you?" She had been diagnosed and successfully treated. With cancer, she had "felt powerless" . . . "totally out of control" of her health, her body and her life.

Although with less intensity, she continued to criticize. I was calm and nearly as much as before we began our conversation. How? It helped knowing that what I told her was a fact. Finally hearing what I said and sufficiently accepting it would give a better chance to avoid the cancer returning. I liked that!

But what helped more was my discovery and strong belief that **it didn't matter that much what she said** to me. Reader, are you ready and willing to know for sure what I mean? You'll find out in the next chapter how that's absolutely true as you read about and uncover the six, not-your-fault STRESS Notions and your truthful answers to them.

The one question test: Chapter Four also includes an original mind-boggling, happiness-protecting assessment that “gets it done” with only one item (question). It tests, actually retests and confirms, both your present and future levels of chronic stress and exactly how confident you are.

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