

Saying “YES” to Less Stress – Part 2 of a series of 3

And now we move on to this second part of three, in learning how to Say “YES” to Less Stress. In part one we learnt about **Stress Awareness** and found out about Coping Skills, in this part we’ll look at what **Assertiveness** means and we’ll focus on **Time Management**. In the final part we’ll see if we can recognise which **Exercise** we may like and visit a place called ‘**Relaxation**’.

ASSERTIVENESS

Assertiveness is not

Assertiveness is not ‘burning your bras’ as was epitomised in the 1960s by the feminist movement. Assertiveness is not about being selfish. Assertiveness is not about telling people what you want and both the consequences. Assertiveness is not about ‘bossing’ people around.

Assertiveness is

Assertiveness is about speaking up for yourself, being heard, recognising that other people have the right to speak up for themselves too and to disagree with what we want to do. Assertiveness is about win-win partnerships, about not having an under-dog, about having everyone’s viewpoint heard.

Are you being heard?

Do you find when you want to say “No I don’t want to do that” you actually say “Yes I’ll do it”? Do you find you get a gut reaction, an “Oh No” sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach? Has your ‘crumple button’ been pressed so that you feel you just can’t say “No” even though you want to?

What behaviours are you using?

When we look at our behaviour we can fairly quickly categorise it into 3 areas:

- (1) Passive/submissive
- (2) Aggressive
- (3) Assertive

Passive/submissive gives in to just about everyone; does most of the things that other people wants them to do; can’t speak up for themselves; is apologising for themselves almost all the time even when it’s not their fault; sees themselves as the work/family doormat; feels worthless and has very little self respect; and their self esteem is literally ankle high only; they are ALWAYS the ‘loser’.

Aggressive can be split into 2 types:

- (i) the ‘*direct aggressive*’ type – the ‘bully’ who you can see, hear and (at times) feel; never has times for people who don’t do things ‘how they want’; often is rush-rush-rush when doing things and wants things done immediately; and can’t be bothered to help others. This behaviour always goes all out for ‘win at all costs’. And then there’s

- (ii) the ‘*indirect aggressive*’ type – can be your best friend one minute and stabs you in the back the next by undermining you to others (guerrilla tactics); gives you compliments in one breath and then takes them back (bursts your momentary feel-good balloon) the next; makes you feel guilty by playing the ‘poor-me victim game’. The difference between *direct aggressive* and *indirect aggressive* behaviour is that *indirect aggressive* behaviour is not done deliberately – these people have probably been treated like this themselves. With *direct aggressive* behaviour the bully has normally been the bullied at some stage.

Assertive behaviour makes people feel good about themselves; is confident; is positive; is caring; listens to other people points of view; is often seen as fair; recognises that assertiveness may not be the answer to every situation – however it is a choice they can make. Goes for the win-win situation as much as possible.

So whereabouts are you? Direct Aggression means getting dis-stressed because others won’t do as you want. Passive/Submissive gets dis-stressed because you can only do as other want. Assertive means that you can do what you want or as others want – you have a choice.

Look at your body language

Aggressive behaviour generally makes as much noise as they can (shouts); takes up as much space as they can (waving hands around and pointing fingers at people); comes in very close (face-to-face); glares at people (stares them out); stands very close to others (invading their personal space and are intimidating); bangs drawers and doors.

Passive/submissive behaviour tries to make themselves as small as possible with slumped shoulders (tries to be invisible); avoids direct eye contact (looking at the ground); talks in a very small quiet voice; apologises for practically everything (it’s all my fault).

Assertive behaviour stands their ground without being obtrusive in other people’s space; speaks calmly; stands upright; uses correct eye contact; uses supportive encouraging words.

‘Freeze-phrases’

These are phrases which when used by us, tend to ‘switch people off from listening to us’, their eyes glaze over, their attention goes elsewhere. And what are these phrases? Simple everyday phrases which can give us away as being passive, a push-over, a non-starter, a bore.

“yes but...”

“I wish ...”

“I’ll try ...”

“if only ...”

“we’ll see...”

“I can’t do that!”

“maybe ...”

“... I hope so”

“I’ll never be able to do ...”

These are simple phrases which we often use many, many times a day and don’t realise we’re using them. However, when we do use them, the reaction is invariably the same “Oh not again ...” and then the eyes glaze over and the attention goes elsewhere.

So what can we do?

Well, we can begin to make a mental note of **WHEN** we're saying these phrases; **WHO** are we with when we do use these phrases (do we feel intimidated by them?); **WHAT** we were talking about (do we feel uncomfortable talking about that subject?); **WHERE** are we (in familiar or unfamiliar circumstances?). If we want to find out **WHY** and **HOW** we use these phrases, then we enlist some help.

We can start to use more positive language, introduce “Yet ...”, “However ...”, “Have you ever thought about ...” into our conversations.

We can even start talking about something that interests us – oh my gosh that means we'll have to focus on what interests us or we may have to **FIND OUT** what interests us – which is another journey into self development

TIME MANAGEMENT

Time as a resource

Time is a resource. We can never ‘make up’ time or ‘catch up’ on time, we can only use it once and then it's gone. So we can only ‘use’ the time. So, if you catch yourself saying “I don't know where the time has gone” or “I'll make up the time for that report a bit later” then forget it. For when you do attempt to ‘make up time later’ then you're using time that you'd planned to use for something else. And so the ‘time situation’ keeps on rolling over and over until you have to ‘drop’ something to accomplish your task.

Put it this way, if you imagine time as a snow-ball, in fact call it a ‘time-ball’ and each time you say to yourself “I'll make up the time a bit later” then you're rolling the time a bit further and a bit further and your time-ball is growing and growing until you can't roll it any further – and you simply have to stop rolling it and this is where you ‘drop’ a task.

Gain control

Instead of ‘losing’ time start to gain control by planning better. The phrase ‘Failing to plan means planning to fail’ couldn't be more apt. Allow sufficient time to ‘do’ things. Keep a ‘To Do’ list each day and put on it no more than 6 tasks for that day. Prioritise them and stick and your Number 1 task until it's finished or you've done as much as you can do as far as you're concerned. The go on to Number 2 task.

If necessary put your task list into 3 columns: Urgent – *what are the consequences of me not doing this task first (normally Health & Safety and deadlines comes into this category)?* Important – *I need to get this done, however what are the consequences of me not doing this first (will the world end if I delay this for a few hours or even until tomorrow)?* Anything else comes into the *I'll do this after the Urgent and Important tasks in that order.*

Cross out your completed tasks in **BIG BOLD RED** ink – gives you a psychological boost.

Time management pointers

Plan your 'busy' tasks to be in your personal productive time – find out when yours are, when your energies are high and when they're sagging

Manage delay by bringing work forward – make use of those 'unexpected gaps' in your plans.

See what you can delegate to others – let yourself off the hook of 'being the only one who can do this'. Encourage others to take on some of the work – 'bribe' the kids to do the washing up after the meal, encourage them to make their beds.

Have a look at 3 things that you keep on promising yourself you'll do FOR YOU yet you keep on saying to yourself "I haven't got time for me, I'll do that later".

If you keep on putting off what YOU want to do for yourself – you'll never do it. SO, do it now – FOR YOU.

I hope that by reading part two of this 3-part article you will begin to realise that stress is quite normal to all of us and occurs in everyday life. Feeling stress is **your** choice and you can choose to continue or to stop. There is no such thing as a universal stress. Some people are able to cope much more successfully if they become aware of techniques and methods which assist in lowering stress levels so if you want to know more, or want to speak with me, you can contact me as follows:

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