



**Embracing Stress:
5 Tips that will
Transform How You
"Manage" Stress
By Mary B. Lapp, NTP, CHHC**

Stress can be defined as a state of mental or emotional strain that results from demanding circumstances. I find that those circumstances are sometimes quite drastic, and sometimes not. But even just trying to avoid stress can be stressful.

Most of us have experienced the negative side effects of chronic stress. It plays a large hand in autoimmune disease, various illnesses, sleep issues, feeling “stuck”, weight loss challenges, relationship issues... The potential negative effects of stress are endless!

What if stress didn't have to be harmful on your body? What if it could actually be used to Heal your body, if handled correctly?

What if the damage that stress has on your body is influenced by your mindset – and that it doesn't have to do damage?

According to Kelly McGonigal, Ph.D. in The Upside of Stress – it doesn't have to.

After re-evaluating my relationship with stress – my life is transformed. I now view my stress as something my body does when I need to think clearly and get awesome things done! It helps me keep up my self-care, be more efficient, and believe that I Can Do This!!

And so can you!!

Many of my clients have autoimmune disease, hormone issues, brain issues, and/or digestive issues. I have found that embracing stress, along with nutritional therapy and some lifestyle shifts can be a very powerful combination to bring restoration and healing.

I hope you find this helpful!

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5 Tips That Will Transform How You “Manage” Stress

Gleaned partly from [The Upside of Stress](#), and partly from my own ponderings and musings.

1. Understand Stress

Stress is a natural and good mechanism that our body uses to help us handle a challenge. The kind of stress that can do damage is one that is very well known: “Fight, Flight or Freeze.” And Fight, Flight, or Freeze is actually appropriate when bodily harm is anticipated. Think: blood getting spilled. How often does that happen in this day and age?

What you and I stress about 24/7 doesn’t usually harm us physically. And so the Fight, Flight or Freeze response is often unnecessary, potentially harmful in large quantities, and very unhandy in every-day life.

But we have a choice!

Fight, Flight or Freeze is Not the only stress response! Another is “Tend and Befriend.” Tend and Befriend involves the hormone oxytocin, and helps us connect with others, find help, and take care of ourselves and our loved ones. Did you know that you can learn to choose the Tend and Befriend response instead of the Fight, Flight or Freeze? Oh yes, you can!

Story:

After a huge catastrophe, people generally handle their stress in one of two ways:

Fight, Flight or Freeze: they get in fights, go looting, break things, hide or run away.

Or

Tend and Befriend: They help the people who need help. They befriend people, and bond. Everyone shares food and shelter and

it ends up being at least partially positive.

Both of these situations are a stress response! Which one sounds like the best to you?

Action Step:

The best way to choose Tend and Befriend? When you are stressed, and your heart is pumping, say – “OK!! My body is geared up for some Great work, and is getting blood to all my organs, how awesome is that?! Let’s Do This!” This little shift is a huge start to switching our stress response.

2. You Can Do It!!

Did you know that your stress response becomes very empowering and energizing when you decide that **you can handle the situation**? For real! That small decision changes everything. And I have news for you: You are alive! So you are obviously doing something right.

Story:

Charlotte was very nervous for a huge test that she had to take. It was a doozy. Her heart was pumping and she could hardly think. Until her teacher talked to her. Her teacher told her that if she was stressed and anxious – Great!! That was extra blood pumping to her brain and organs for clear thinking, and that the stress would help her to do well. All of the sudden, Charlotte could think more clearly. She felt empowered and knew that she could do it!

Action Step:

Attitude Shift – Choose to believe that You Can Do This!! Even if you need some help. And if you really can’t, say no!

3. **Paradigm to Ponder:**

Working through your biggest stressors brings your biggest breakthroughs.

Story:

Jill had so much anxiety about money. It was always on her mind, but she never could seem to get organized. She always had some bill looming that she had to rearrange her whole life to pay. After she cleaned up her finances a bit, got organized and worked on some of the energetics behind money – she was able to not overspend, pay her bills on time, and felt a freedom that she had never felt before.

Action Step:

Ponder this paradigm. What are your biggest stressors? What are some breakthroughs that may follow after you clear some “clutter”?

4. **Pursue meaning.**

It’s generally the things that we care about, things that have meaning for us, that stress us out the most. Relationships, Movement, Time, Generosity, Self-Care, Kindness... These things are worth pursuing! Always have good boundaries, you can’t necessarily do Everything-All-The-Time, and you may need help, but you can do it! Meaningful experiences trump worry-about-stress every time.

Story:

Sometimes Larissa resented that she was her kid’s “chauffer.” It was pretty much all she did all day. When she intentionally made sure that she did something for herself every day (good boundaries!) and remembered that Family was one of her core

values and had lots of meaning for her – it took the sting out of it and she was able to have a much better attitude.

Action Step:

What is most meaningful to you? Does anything about that cause stress? Can you decide on good boundaries, and do it with gusto? What would that look like?

5. Prioritize Self Care

Taking care of ourselves is something that we can do for ourselves, but it also helps us bring our very best version of ourselves to our loved ones. It is a gift for everyone! When we have taken care of ourselves, we come from a much more whole place, and it is so much easier to embrace stress.

Story:

Janelle loves deep conversations with good friends. If she goes too long without one, she just feels....hungry. And irritable. It can actually stress her out if she doesn't get time away from her children and have a deep conversation. When she understood this, she decided to make it a priority. She finds that she is a better wife, a more patient mother, and chooses a much better stress response if she gets that time in. And this effects every area of her life for the positive.

Action Step:

Understand what kind of self-care makes you the best version of yourself. A version who knows that you can do it, and that you can do it well? How can you prioritize that?

Please feel free to connect with me and let me know your thoughts!