

Seven Lighthearted Tips for Managing Distress

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Dr. Hans Selye called healthy stress *eustress* and too much stress *distress*. We need challenge or stress to survive, to give meaning to our lives and a reason to get out of bed each morning. It is best to discover that zone where stimulation becomes DISTRESS and avoid going there. But, hey, we are humans and often find ourselves in the pothole of despair, frustration and strain. Here are some light hearted ideas to ease the internal tension:

ONE: Describe your distress as if you were seeing and hearing the trigger. “My boss told me, ‘Your calculations are off. Redo the report.’” Now make up an honest, creative or silly answer to this question. “Why do you love this stress?” A possible answer is “This gives me a chance to redo the calculations with a built in raise for me.”

TWO: Ask a friend or support person to listen, without offering solutions. You want to simply and loudly release your woes. Wallow, wail, whine, groan and cry with exaggeration. Maybe the two of you will end up laughing.

THREE: Call on your Inner Wisdom for some cheering up. I have an image of a little red breasted robin that brings me some chirpy words. “Cheer up, today will pass and tomorrow could be worse or better . . . and your mother still loves you.”

FOUR: Have a soothing or fun song that you sing to yourself. One of my favourites is “On a clear day, rise and look around and you will see who you are. On a clear day how it will astound you, that the glow of your being outshines every star.”

FIVE: Rewrite a silly ditty. Mary Had a Little Lamb.

Suzy had a dis-stressful day.

Mistakes happened wherever she would go.

And no matter where Suzy went

The parking meter man would know.

SIX: Develop some affirming self talk:

- What other people think of me is none of my business.
- The road to success is made through mistakes.
- If one person tells me I look like a horse, forget it. If two people tell me I look like a horse, I might want to pay attention to my behaviour. If three or more people tell me I look like a horse, it's time to check the price of saddles.
- It could be worse. I could be dead.
- There's always somebody doing better than me and somebody doing worse than me. At least I have me.
- A weakness named can become a strength.
- “I think I can. I know I can” just like the Little Red Engine that Could.
- Maybe the biggest joke of my life is my seriousness. It must be an illusion of grandeur to imagine I am so important.

SEVEN: A day filled with too much stress warrants an extra dose of pampering: a nap, chocolate, a bubble bath, a massage, a pedicure, movie and a bag of popcorn.

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