

# Stress Free: How Good Are You Willing To Have It

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As the unstructured and flowing days of summer are left behind and more scheduled school days take their place, it is not uncommon for us to feel an increase in our stress level. What is stress anyway? It is one of those elusive terms that can take on different meanings for each of us. It carries different triggers and creates subtly different physical experiences for each individual. It is the current buzzword and each of us will nod our head in sympathy as we listen to a co-worker or fellow parent at the bus stop speak of their stress level.

One of the key sources of what we call stress is our sense of being powerless in our own lives. Whether it is a sense of no control in our work situations or in our social lives. We feel unable to say “no” to a friend who takes advantage of us, the invitation to a party that we have no interest in attending or to the request for overtime hours.

Stress creeps in as we begin to live more and more at the mercy of things and events in our lives. When we find ourselves at the effect of things outside of ourselves we begin to notice ourselves saying things like “should”, “would”, “could”, “have to”, “if only”. We are living in a way that places us at the effect of our circumstances. There is a strong overtone of victim and martyr in this way of engaging life. Not a pleasant thought and certainly not a path that leads to any sense of empowerment.

The critical element in reclaiming our personal power and reducing our sense of stress comes from recognizing that we always making choices. We can choose to continue living at the mercy of external circumstances or we can choose to take action and begin to shape our lives. We can begin to say “no” without requiring lengthy explanations or seeking someone else’s permission to claim what is meaningful for us. There is undeniable clarity that you convey in your tone of voice when you are willing to stop betraying yourself and say what is true for you. Let me make a key distinction, this is NOT what is true for you about anyone else; it is what is true for YOU about YOU.

“But there are consequences” you may be thinking. Of course there are consequences for any choice you make. Saying “yes” when it is a betrayal of yourself comes with a consequence in the same way that claiming what is important to you carries a consequence. The consequence is typically a reflection of the quality of your life. How good are you willing to have it?

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