



# Less Stress Press

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Dedicated to hope and help since

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# Minute

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*"The Midwest Center is committed to providing the individual with cost and time efficient cognitive behavioral based solutions - solutions that foster strength, character and self-empowerment."*

## Water, water everywhere

...that's the kind of year my basement has had. After spending over \$6,000 dollars on remedies I think we've finally figured out one of the big causes. The check valve on our sump pump was not properly installed. Which for those not in the "know," means that we keep recycling the same water. When electrically challenged, as in NONE, we have water, water everywhere.

"Anger is never without reason, but seldom with a good one." Ben Franklin. Ben, after moving furniture to higher ground and vacuuming water for the 5th time, I definitely had a darn good reason!

I don't think I've ever had the same check valve on my tongue as most folks have. As a young child I remember constantly being, "Shushed," of course that isn't always good. It drove me inward. I was a rather shy, fearful child. I constantly worried about how I was presenting myself. I flushed and blushed easily, wore a turtleneck to the prom so my blotches wouldn't show. (Or, was that my dad's idea?) Some children are allowed to "fully express themselves," perhaps given too much leeway, and never develop that check valve.

As I age I notice I'm getting more outspoken again. I'm going back to that

part of me that is spontaneous and devil-may-care. I am once again speaking off the top of my head. Oh my! I have heard it said that after a certain mid-age we go into a teen-like stage...only this time instead of rebelling against our parents we start acting out to our children's discomfort. This can be a good thing, or a bit bothersome. On a recent shopping trip I overheard a parent severely berating a small child. My girls ran for a different department, as I loudly said, "Well doesn't that sound kind and uplifting?"

How about "bad words?" Know any? Heh heh, I do. I've gotten a bit salty over the years. Now that I have all these bright, verbal grandchildren I've had to reassess my expletives. I found a great idea in, ONLY ANGELS CAN WING IT, The rest of us have to practice, by Liz Curtis Higgs.

"You see, having spent ten years immersed in the wilder ways of the world, I had developed a vocabulary that was, shall we say, "colorful." Since I wanted to move past that foolish period of my life and never expose my children to those particular shades of blue, I made a list of the really "Ten Things I Could Say, if I Would Say, but I Won't Say." Use your imagination.

### DON'T PANIC!

- Accept the feeling, it can't hurt you.
- Give yourself permission to feel anxious.
- Don't over-breathe. Breathe slowly through your nose.
- Calm yourself with positive self-talk.
- Let go. Just float and flow.
- Distract yourself, it is only anxiety.
- Use the adrenalin in a positive pursuit.
- Don't let a bad day scare you.
- Let time pass. IT WILL GO AWAY.

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Then I gave each one of these words or phrases a number, one through ten. Now when the urge to say something less than kind strikes, I let 'em have it: "FOUR!" Sometimes I even flash them all four fingers, which really confuses drivers on the highway. I can read their lips—"What is she saying to me?"—as their faces contort with confusion.

Meanwhile, the kids think this is hysterical. "Boy, Mom is really having a SEVEN kind of day!" They'll sing out. It works like a charm. No one is offended, not my children, not God, nor anyone in earshot. Since I've more or less forgotten which number goes with what, I'm not offended either. And, of course, when you behave so ridiculously, you can't help but laugh at yourself."

Review lesson six this week if you related to this "Minute." In addition check your library for a fresh new book on the subject of anger. Perhaps the following exercise might be of benefit. Take an anger moment tomorrow, and when you have walked away with that "grrrrr" feeling in your stomach, draw a picture of the problem. Put the picture away for 3 days and then look at it and answer the following questions: (Remember there are no wrong answers and if an answer doesn't come at first, try again later.)

What have you noticed now that you had not noticed before?

What weaknesses or vulnerabilities does the picture show you?

Now add yourself to the picture, dealing with the problem successfully.

How will you use this image to help yourself in the future?

I would love to see some of your pictures and solutions. Please send them to my attention at the Midwest Center, P.O. Box 205, Oak Harbor, OH 43449

Have you noticed when you are feeling down that you are more aware of reasons to be blue? Have you noticed when you are really sailing along, confused that you are more aware of reasons to be blue? Have you noticed when you are really sailing along, you notice things to be happy about? Have you noticed how your mind, body

and spirit feel when you are in a red-hot rage? Have you noticed how you think when you are angry? Along with anger, come changes in thinking, behavior and physiology. All moods have identifiable thought process changes. If you get good at identifying the beginning changes in mind, body and spirit, you will get good at managing them in a positive, productive way.

\*Mind: I am feeling threatened. Someone is breaking my rules. Someone is definitely not meeting my expectations. It's not FAIR.

\*Body: Clenching jaw, fists, toes curled, neck spasms, skull pain, and tight band around head, increased blood pressure, heart rate, and respirations.

\*Spirit: Depression, hiding, defending, attacking, aggressiveness, unkindness

Note: I am focusing on outward behavior. There is equal harm to our mind, body and spirit when we channel our anger inward...I'll save that for another time.

One of my favorite coping skills for anger is to focus on my perceptions. Why did I perceive the situation as a trigger for anger? I like the example of being on a crowded bus. It's August in a huge city. There was a recent deodorant factory malfunction and no one is wearing any! I am standing under the armpit of a big hairy fellow wearing sunglasses. Suddenly the bus lurches! OW! Ouch, ouch, ouch! He just stepped on my toe - the sore one no less. There goes that "grrrr" feeling in my stomach. I will just give him a piece of my mind. (Check first see if I can spare it...yes, yes I think I can.) I turn quickly...I catch a glimpse of his eye through the side of his glasses...oh, he is blind.

What happened to my anger? PERCEPTION! INTERPRETATION?

Peace, Carolyn

If you feel you would benefit from a personal coach, please call (800-990-4692) for more information.

## PUBLIC SPEAKING

Johnny Carson once told an interviewer that he got nervous before EVERY broadcast. It sure didn't show did it? One of my favorite actors, Nicholas Cage, once shared that he has had panic attacks. It sure doesn't show. We could make a fairly long list of entertainers who know the worst of anxiety. This reminds me of the statement, "We create what we fear." (Dr. Phil McGraw) I think that there is a tiny part of our make up that demands that we overcome certain fears, circumstances or patterns of behavior. We keep making choices that lead us back to a similar opportunity to resolve the wrinkle in our psyche.

Fear of public speaking is the number one fear for most folks. A very successful businessman in MN wrote recently that he has attained public recognition for his many years of public service and will receive an award soon. This of course necessitates a few words from him. He would like to send a 'stand-in,' to accept the plaque. He wanted to know if the Attacking Anxiety and Depression program would help him.

I responded: The program will help in the long run, however, there is no quick fix, instant feel-good-course. (He wanted to be over his fear of speaking in two weeks.) The first four lesson will help right away, especially the six steps on the back of the flash card that coordinates lesson two.

Nutshell advice for the short term:

#1 Be prepared. Practice your first three minutes of material until you have them down pat. Believe it or not the rest will flow.

#2 Write 3-5 points you want to make on an index card. This will free you from the fear that you will forget what you want to say.

#3 Right before your talk, try to position yourself so you can pace and BREATHE, Breath, breath for three minutes (at least) before your presentation. (Make your exhale a bit longer than your inhale.)

#4 Remember your audience isn't expecting an orator...they are looking for a REAL Human Being. What do you have to share that will make life easier, brighter or more peaceful for others?

Let us know what helps you. Carolyn Dickman, a.k.a. Rubber Knees

An excellent new book on public speaking by Janet Esposito, IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Overcome Your Fear of Public Speaking and Performing. We will be offering it in our next LESS STRESS PRESS, or purchase it through your local bookstore.

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FROM PANIC TO POWER, is the first of two books Lucinda has written. After all this time we are still getting feedback about it. Someone from Manitoba writes: "I was diagnosed last year in July and started going to therapists. The first made me feel more panicky...have a new therapist and she is really helping me a lot. I got your book and when I started reading it-it was like you were reading my mind! Everything in your book described what I had. I also have your other book: LIFE WITHOUT LIMITS, and it is also really good.

I have read these books when I am feeling down or panicky. I find they are the most helpful books I have ever read!! My anxiety is starting to be less and less...I am learning to enjoy life now and not worry so much...I just wanted to thank you for writing these two terrific books and for understanding what I and other anxiety disorder sufferers go through. N.D.

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