

Promises, promises

Is stress keeping you from delivering?

By Marianna Paulson

One of the things that has become apparent to me in my business dealings is that some people have trouble keeping their promises. "I'll get back to you with that information." "I'll call you and see how you like xyz." "I'll email you with my report."

I know these people genuinely want to follow up. They really do mean it when they say it. However, as an independent business owner, there are many hats to wear. How do you do it all and remain sane? Or keep the clients you do have and get new ones?

The answer is learning to transform your stress. I don't need to tell you what your stressors are – many of you are living them and may feel it's normal to be experiencing what you are experiencing.

There is a vast difference between normal and natural. Normal can be something we adjust to, which may not be all that comfortable. For example, we may have a shoe with a worn-down heel that we know is annoying, yet we postpone the repair. I'm sure you have other examples: an appliance with a broken control or a door that always squeaks – things that irritate us and over time wear us out.

Natural, on the other hand, is the way we were meant to be before stress took over, wreaking havoc on our lives. When we're under chronic stress, our ability to perform is impacted. It's like stuffing a plastic bag – it stretches, but sooner or later it tears. We just never know when.

Our interpretation of events as stressful wears out our nervous system and ages us. Cortisol, the stress hormone, is produced in response to how we think and feel. As cortisol production increases, DHEA, the vitality or anti-aging hormone is reduced. Think of it like a teeter-totter. Cortisol goes up, DHEA goes down. So if you've ever heard yourself say, "I feel and look old and tired," you'll have an idea of what's contributing to that.

Unless we learn to change our perceptions, other events, which we

Is stress making you a mess?

Learn to recognize these symptoms of stress:

- Irritability
- Disturbed sleep
- Quickness to anger
- Increase in worrying
- Forgetfulness
- Difficulty enjoying life
- Lowered libido
- Fatigue
- Increase in aches and pains
- Frequent cold or flu viruses
- Headaches and backaches
- High blood pressure

often describe as "just life," trigger the same hormonal cascade, regardless of whether or not it's a true life-or-death situation. What type of events, you ask? It could be anything from business worries to oversleeping, hitting every red light when you're already late, arguments, traffic....

Multiply these events over time and they can show up as aches and pains, fatigue, frustration, lack of concentration, irritability, poor memory, an inability to sleep well or other health concerns. The great news is that by learning how to change the way you interpret the events in your life, you are immediately making a positive change in your body.

Have you lost out because you meant to follow up, you really did, but something else came along that grabbed your attention, putting that intention to rest? What's the solution? Start by noticing how you feel in certain situations – what do you tend to do when you are stressed, upset, angry or hurt? We can't change unless we know, and when we know we can take action. Once we take action, remembering to follow up on those promises becomes much easier. ■



Marianna Paulson is a licensed stress coach, a certified teacher and Principal of Change of Heart Stress Solutions. She will be presenting the seminar *Stressing Leadership* on May 26, 2009 at the third Annual CMA British Columbia Members Conference. Visit www.cmabc.com/2009_conference.htm for more details.

