

## Stress

Another fruitful prayer might be that you'll stop hurting yourself in the name of helping yourself or helping someone else. You do this everyday by setting or accepting expectations for yourself that do not match your natural flow of life. In doing so, you create Stress. Stress is simply the pressure between an expectation and Reality. Stress is always brought upon oneself, mostly to satisfy or protect the Ego, and never outwardly gained. For some it has become an addicting intoxicant.

If you are one of these people, it will be very difficult to comprehend what I am about to explain. Like an alcoholic sees liquor, you will have excuses and justifications to explain that stress is necessary and unavoidable, even helpful at times. I will tell you it is none of those. It causes much harm. Harm, however, that you can henceforth avoid.

One notable Teacher wrote, *Fix your attention wholeheartedly upon Spiritual things, and meanwhile do all that needs to be done in the ordinary way; and without consciously trying to make haste you will be amazed to discover the pace at which your soul has hastened.* This pace is found by visiting Reality as often as possible through awareness.

Who am I? Here is where it begins. You feel there must be an answer to the question, so you spend much time searching for it. No answer is necessary, I tell you, when you are connected to the True Spirit. Being disconnected, however, you look throughout the only life you know for something to *be*. You *look* with your *thoughts* and through the filter of Ego. You find only temporary answers. You play the roles, sometimes effectively, but you always end up back where you started, asking yourself, "Who am I?"

Along with the search for *who you are*, comes stress of living up to each of the temporary answers. As you wander through your life, your thoughts are consciously or unconsciously fixed on presenting the person who you've committed to be. All actions are orchestrated to produce the intended result. To change would mean weakness, a lack of integrity, the Ego warns. When doubt arises about who you are, the Ego warns that if you are to be successful, you must *be* somebody. You live up to your image at the cost of your soul.

Many find identities in polar ideologies, where they revel in their own opinions, their ability to think intelligently and in finding fault in those opposed. If you find yourself in such a way, see how much stress this brings to your life, with no chance of victory or satisfaction ever to be found. This will be damage overload to any search for Real Peace. Watch this and be willing to leave it behind; you will not regret its passing.

Pressure from others can be avoided simply by detaching from the consideration of what they may think of you. No one has the power to pressure you into doing anything. You accept their expectations and mechanically obey because of something you feel you will get in return. The practical step in avoiding further unnecessary stress related to others is to begin saying "no." Stress is too high of a price to pay for anything.

This is difficult because the Ego will send a signal that to deny help to another will be seen as calloused and inconsiderate—possibly mean. Being convinced this is true, you help wherever you can—to the point that you become all of those things toward yourself. The Ego then tries to ease the pain by calling your act of kindness “humility.” That is nonsense. To help anyone you must first be helped by your own True Self. The world is big; God would never put the relief of another’s distress squarely upon your shoulders. This is an act that you do of your own will. Humility is to know this simple fact.

So why do you jump so quickly to the aid of another at your own expense, that of stress? Even when the proposed recipient of your assistance says it is not necessary, you insist. You are sure that they do not really mean what they say and will appreciate your help nonetheless. But what else is going on? In Reality it actually pains you to think that someone else might take your place- does it not? You fear that you may miss the opportunity to *be* helpful. Whose opportunity? Your opportunity, of course. Be wide-awake the next time this situation unfolds; you can see the truth for yourself.

If you look closely, you will see that pressures from duties you assign to income are self-inflicted as well. No job or income producing work should exceed your soul’s true pace. If it does, you have chosen this for yourself. It is easy to say that you are expected too much of, but why then would you continue? Again the answer lies in what *you* want.

Where financial stress is present, let me ask, which came first, your current income or the stress of not having enough of it? If stress is the pressure between Reality and expectation, which will you sacrifice to relieve the stress? Will you just choose to live with the stress, or see the Truth and authentically help yourself?

Stress is interest of the highest rate. It limits your ability to practice awareness, which is the one thing you need to reconcile your troubles. Such a truthful reconciliation can bring your practical affairs into balance and provide you with a twofold solution. You will be free of the stress, which can make you more gainfully productive and better yet, you will find lasting peace in living with your means.

Truth’s way is easy and you were meant to have peace. Any stray upon the path is a human choice, of human will. Stress is poison to the Soul. You have everything thing you need to be well. There is no need to strain for more and poison your self in the meantime. Seeing this, you can happily accept the melting away of what you do not need.