



RELAX

(YOUR LIFE MAY DEPEND ON IT)

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It's Monday Morning.

Let the Stress Begin!

Work can be the most stressful part of our lives. Did you know that a large number of heart attacks happen at 9 am on Monday morning? Maybe it's a family or neighbor problem that's causing you stress. Finances can be stressful. Arguments with partners can be taxing. Dealing with misbehaving teenagers can be nerve-racking. Mothers-in-law are in a category of their own, as are bosses.

When I was fresh out of college, I had a degree for teaching. I tried very hard to be a teacher, but I was not suited to it, nor did I enjoy it. I hated going to work and was developing ulcers. One day, I said to a particularly misbehaving child, "Why do you behave the way you do? Why can you not settle down like the other children?"

He looked down at his shoes with tears in his eyes and said, "I guess it's because my daddy hits my head on the ceiling until the water comes." This was a traumatized kid who was virtually unteachable until his trauma, home life, and mental health issues were solved. It set me off on my journey to be a psychologist specializing in children with behavior problems. I looked inside to see what my stress was telling me in

order to bring about change in *MY* life.

So, let's address what stresses you and what to do about it.

Name your three biggest stressors:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Draw something that represents stress to you

What You Have the Power to Change

Are there people in your life who are stressing you out? If so, you have some choices. You can fight with them, ignore them, dance with them, or see them from a different point of view. One thing you can't do is change another person. Another person can only change himself, and he has to want to change. It is not your job to change him. The only person you can change is the person sitting in your chair. Every stressor is caused by a problem that needs to be solved or set aside because it is not in your power to solve it. The serenity prayer has been a powerful tool for me over the years:

"God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference."

It's important to determine which problems are in your power to change and which ones are not. Every time you're thinking, "He just won't do _____," change your thinking to "What can I do about that?" Remember, you cannot change other people. You can only change yourself. You can change your attitude, ask someone else to change, or provide incentives to encourage someone else to change. But, if that person chooses not to change, your best strategy is to let it go. Don't waste energy on something that

*Draw a peaceful or a happy picture
or write something peaceful*

is not in your power to influence. Don't continue to obsess about it either. You can get as angry or sad as you need to be, but it still won't change that other person. Look inside yourself to see what you can change about yourself to reduce your annoyance or concern about the other person's behavior.

Is the stress in your life making you sick?

When stress is not resolved and remains for long periods of time, it harms our physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and relationship health. According to several studies, as much as fifty percent of all physical illnesses appear to be stress related. People who feel that their lives are overly stressful and demanding are more likely to report physical illness symptoms. So don't stress, use your imagination for positive mental imagery and *manage* your stress rather than letting it manage you.

Do you have symptoms that you attribute to your stress, such as stomach aches, headaches, and gastro-intestinal problems? Place them next to the stressors below.

Stressor

Symptom

What do you notice about the things that distress you the most?

Managing your stress better should reduce your symptoms. Managing stress involves reframing your stressors, changing your lifestyle, and using relaxation techniques and mental imagery.

The Stepladder of Change



I broke my arm recently because I stood on my desk to hang a picture and then fell when I stepped from the desk to the chair. When I got to the emergency room, the nurse said, “You know you can buy a stepladder at Lowe’s for \$39.99.” It was not funny then, but it makes a good point. Stepladders are very useful tools, but making progress with this type of stuff takes time. (I will never stand on my desk again, but I still have not bought a stepladder!)

Remember the song, “Don’t Worry, Be Happy”? Worry won’t help you. Worry cannot change the situation, but it can motivate you to take action. Worry is uncomfortable; that’s its job, so to speak. When we are uncomfortable, we are motivated to do something about it.

So when you begin to worry, don’t forget Step 2 – problem solve. What makes you worry to the

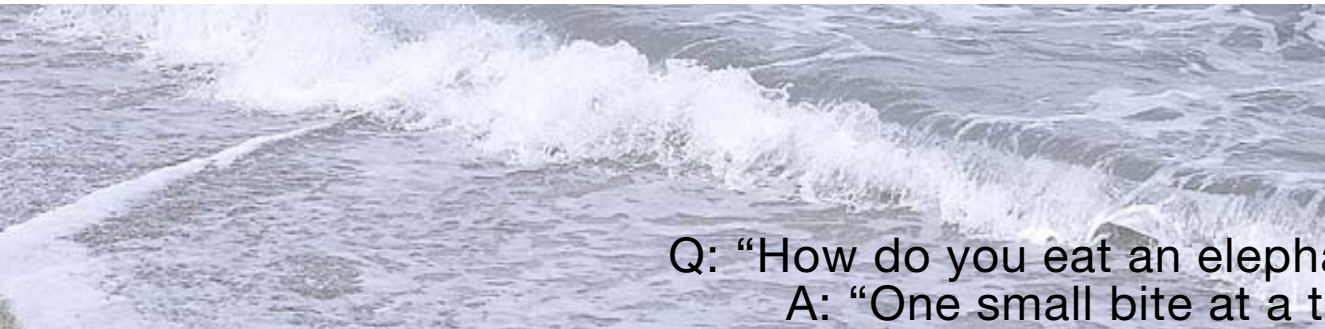
point you are uncomfortable?

Taking any action, no matter how small, in the direction of solving the problem will reduce your discomfort? If you solve this problem, what will happen? How will life be better for you?

So the goal is:

Old Chinese proverb:

The journey of a
thousand miles begins with one step



Q: “How do you eat an elephant?”
A: “One small bite at a time.”

What steps will put you closer to reaching your goal?

Break down your steps to make them manageable.

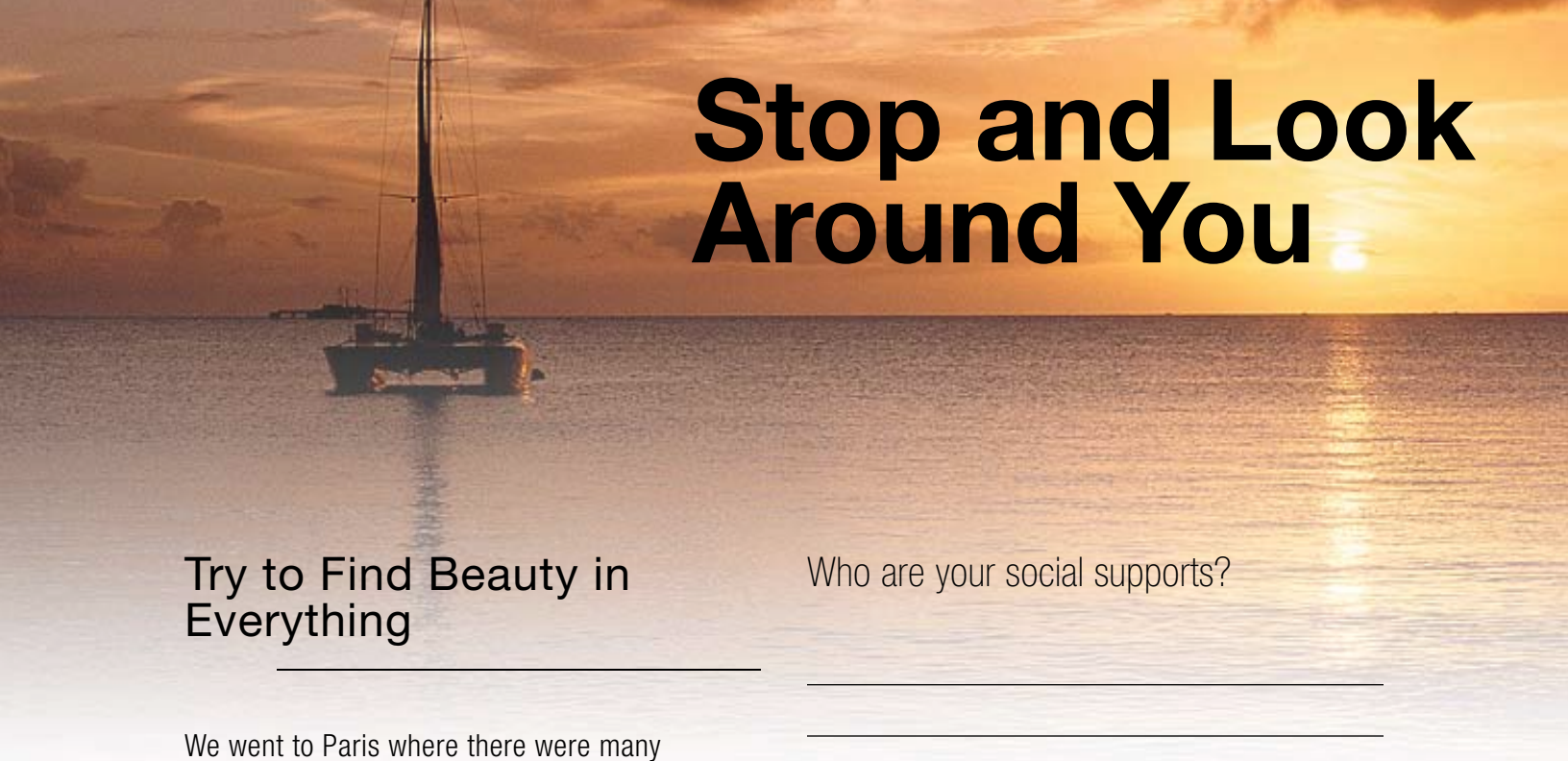
Sometimes you need to get rid of barriers standing in the way of progress. Are there any barriers that you need to remove? How are you going to do that? Do it within one week!

What is the first small step you can take toward the goal that can be taken within one week?

Report your progress here:

Make a plan to take that one small step and do it within one week. Describe your progress.

The next pages repeat this process for each of your steps so you can map out a clear path toward your goal.



Stop and Look Around You

Try to Find Beauty in Everything

We went to Paris where there were many beautiful monuments, churches, castles, and countryside scenes to see. Seeing beautiful things rejuvenates me. I find myself taking deep breaths and just enjoying the scenery. Beauty can be in your back yard, but can also be far away. It's important to find beautiful things and do your best to just soak them in.

Use Social Support

Our friends and family are the ones who give us social support, which is the number one antidote to the stress we are feeling. Social support can help us see a new perspective, help us solve problems, give us comfort, and let us know we are not alone. All of this helps us manage stress better.

Who are your social supports?

When some people are stressed they tend to avoid others. They say they don't want to burden others with their problems or they don't want to let others see them cry. When you are stressed is the very time when you need others most. When others are stressed, they need you. Do you feel good when you help another person? Why would you deprive someone of that feeling that they could have by helping you?

How freely do you use your social supports?

Name three ways to improve your social support?

Helping someone else can take your mind off your problems, too. Lend a helping hand and volunteer some time. Do a good deed for a neighbor or friend. You'll be amazed at how good it makes you feel. By helping others, you help yourself.

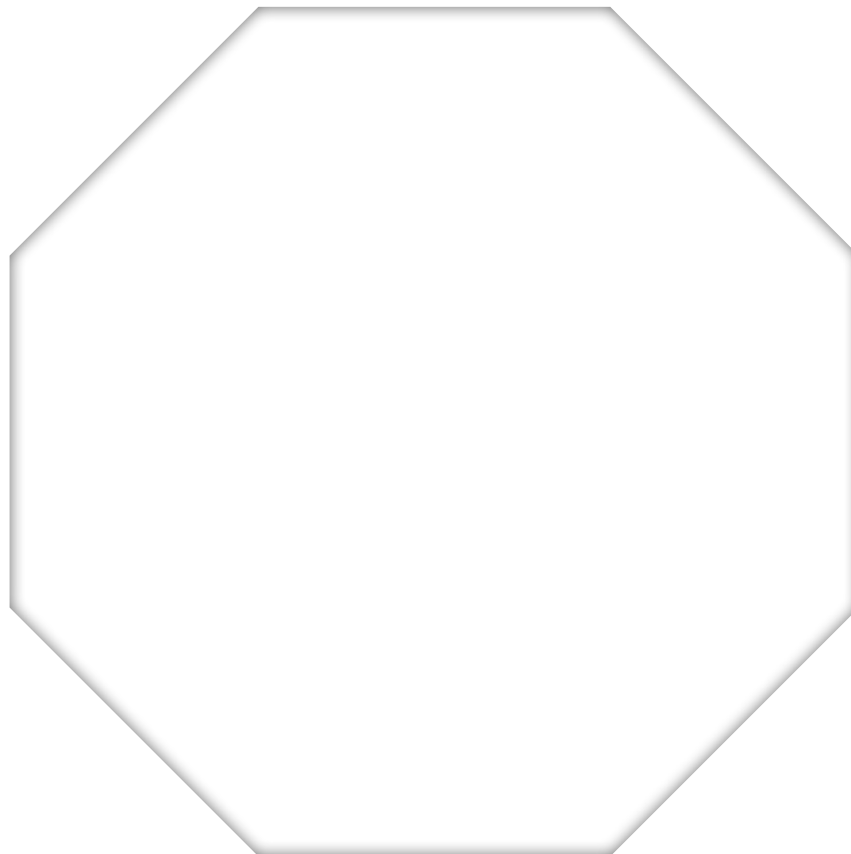
How can you help someone else or do a good deed? What will you do for a random act of kindness?

Spending Your Life Energy Wisely

The amount of energy we have to take care of all of the activities of our daily lives is fixed. For

discussion sake, let's say that you have \$100 worth of energy to spend. This is all you get for a lifetime. This means when you use energy, you must also replenish your supply. Being angry with your partner for not picking up his socks uses energy, dancing with your partner replenishes energy.

Use the octagon below to divide your life into sections that correspond to all of your activities (sleeping, grooming, family, eating, recreation, chores, and work). Make one section for unexpected problems. Assign a dollar amount to each section. It is always good planning to set some energy aside in reserve. You may save some of your energy for later use by placing a dollar amount in the bank below. All of your energy must add up to \$100. Do this exercise in pencil in case you decide to change something.



On a scale of 1 to 100, how important are these problems? Place a number from 1 to 100 next to each problem, under "Importance." The level of importance can be changed as needed. Now, from the octagon above, put the amount of energy you are spending on this problem in the final column.

Problem	Initial if in your Power (self-change)	Importance (1 - 100)	Energy Being Spent (Total = unexpected problems + bank)

Look at your list. How much are you paying in energy for problems that are not in your power to solve or have low importance? _____. Don't spend \$50 on a 10 cent problem or one that you'll never solve.

Are you spending too much energy on a problem of low importance or a problem for which you have no control? Are you spending a lot of your energy on a problem that is actually not very important? Can you think of ways to spend less energy in those areas?

What conclusions do you draw after doing this exercise? Do you have enough energy to do everything your life requires?

Are you spending your energy wisely? If not, how might you be able to spend it more wisely?

Since the only person that you can change is sitting in your chair, you must first decide if the problem is something you can solve. If it is not in your power to solve it, how much energy should you really be spending on it?

In the space below, make a plan to reduce energy spent on problems of low importance or ones not in your power to solve.

You can change your attitude or you can change the situation. Both are effective. Have you been thinking negatively about something and not recognizing its positive points? Write down the positive and negative points and make sure your thinking is balanced.

Example: You hate your job. After making your list, you are reminded that you are making really good money at this job. You enjoy your coworkers. and are able to work toward a promotion and new challenges. Now you can go back to work with a new perspective.

Choose a problem or worry that has been on your mind. Remember the glass can be both half empty and half full. List the pros and cons.

PROS

CONS



Are there any obstacles to carrying out your plans? If so, identify them.

Example: You hate your job. You don't have enough confidence to believe that you can improve conditions where you work. How will you remove or reduce obstacles before proceeding with your plans?

As you use up your energy, you must also refill your reserves. Positive emotions replenish your energy supplies. Steps toward solutions puts energy back into your system, as well.

What replenishes you?

Look at every problem with a new perspective. All problems have two sides—a positive and negative side. The negative is the pain or feeling

of discomfort of the situation, while the positive is the lesson that we need to learn from it. When a problem is giving you great stress, think about what you can learn from it. There is always a silver lining.

Think about the positive lessons you can learn from your major problems. What can they teach you?

Example: In the days of the knights in shining armor, a sword was made strong by putting it into flames, then beating it with a hammer, and then plunging it into cold water. The skill with which one did this determined the strength of the sword. Stress can be like that. The skill with which you manage your stress determines how strong you will be when the event is over. What skill have you gained from managing your stress?

[illegible][illegible]

[illegible]

When stress is getting you down, professional help from a counselor, psychologist, social worker, or minister can help. Don't be afraid to ask for assistance. It might be the best thing you have done for yourself in a while. If you have difficulty solving a problem on your own, do you need help to solve it? If you are overly stressed, do you need help? If you feel sad, anxious, or angry more than half of the time and can't seem to shake it, you may need professional help.

Do you feel this way? Who can you go to for help? What is the first step? List some places where you can find some resources that may help you.





Stress And Growth

Life is a growth process requiring constant changes. We are on this earth to learn what we can about ourselves and our relationship to the world and others. This is so that every person can become the best that he or she can be. It's like taking a train ride; the scenery is continually changing. You can anxiously await the destination or fearfully brace yourself for the possibility of a train wreck and never enjoy the ride. If you do, you will miss a lot along the way. Instead, you can enjoy the journey, stop and take side trips, learn about the places and things that are all around your path. You will arrive refreshed and satisfied, having done everything along the way that you cared to do. Everything in our lives has meaning. Saying "yes" to life means enjoying the scenery and letting the destination take care of

itself. It also means looking for the changes that will help you grow. Stress reactions can be good indicators of where to start looking.

Draw the engine of a train in the center of the next page. Draw the track in front of and behind the train. Imagine that the train represents where you are in your life's journey today. Along the track behind the train draw items that represent major events in your life. In front of the train draw items to represent where you think you might be going in your life. You can also draw side trips if you wish.

Draw something that represents stress to you

Problems that cause you stress in your life are like obstacles on the track, engine trouble, or a bumpy ride. It might even be a train robbery. Problems can motivate you, teach you something, or wear you down. The choice is yours. Stress is

a reaction to any event in our lives. It is a normal part of life, and it's what motivates us to get up in the morning and keep going all day. Stress can be revitalizing, energizing and rewarding or it can affect us in unhealthy ways.

When faced with a stressor, we can read, talk to others, and look within ourselves for the information that we need to deal with our stressors. Everything we need to solve any problem is inside of us, although we may need others to help us find it. We should take a new perspective, one that seeks the lessons in life and helps us to face, rather than run from or fear, the challenges. Often, the more severe the stress or the crisis, the greater the lesson to be learned is. It is important to remember that we can change ourselves, our perspective, the things and events around us, but not other people.

List some problems that you have solved and what you learned from the experience.

For problems that you have not yet solved, what might be the hidden lesson within the experience?

Write a poem or story or draw a picture

THREADS

Tangled threads of pain and sorrow
Wrap around my heart and soul.
Knots choke the breath of life,
Yet the struggle is not done.
Picking up pieces of my life,
Threads of who I am.
Putting them back into place
Weaving a new fabric.
I'm not who I was.
The old is woven with the new,
As I move along
Back and forth
Recapturing threads.
A new cloth is created.
From Mother Earth,
My voice within
Visions appear and
Move me on again.
A new day brings the light
Joy fills me up anew.
Now I see what I must do.
The colors blend
With pictures clear
And I begin
Again.

Changing Your Lifestyle

All change is self-change and change comes in stages (*Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross, 1992*). Prochaska's *Stages of Change* are included and expanded here. Read about the stages and try adding an example from your life.

1. Pre-contemplative means that you are not thinking about making a change. You might not be aware of the problem. For example if you need to lose a few pounds, but are pre-contemplative, you may say to yourself, "One hundred and sixty-five pounds is a good weight for my height."

personal example: _____

2. The Contemplative stage means you are aware of the problem and thinking about making changes. "Maybe I should lose some weight."

personal example: _____

3. The Preparation stage involves an intention to take action and failed attempts in the past. "I



want to start a new diet and exercise program."

personal example: _____

4. Commitment is when the pros outweigh the cons and you commit to action. A public commitment to family or friends is also helpful. "Losing weight will make me feel better and healthier. I will start a plan tomorrow and I will tell my family about my intention."

personal example: _____



5. Goal setting and planning means establishing a goal and a plan for yourself. Make your goal reasonable, specific, and achievable, such as, “I will lose ten pounds in 45 days. Picture yourself having accomplished your goal. Bring this image to mind several times per day. It will help you stay on track.

personal example: _____

6. Action is when you take the first step in a plan. “I have created a diet plan and I will use it for breakfast, lunch, and dinner today.”

personal example: _____

7. In the evaluation stage, you evaluate your progress toward your goal and reinforce your progress or adjust your plan. “I have lost five pounds and that’s great, but I want to lose five more in 20 days.”

personal example: _____

8. In the Maintenance Stage you find ways to maintain or continue your progress by rewarding or reinforcing your accomplishments and preventing relapses. “I have achieved my weight goals and now I want to stay at this weight. I will continue this plan to maintain my gains.”

personal example: _____

Each of these steps is essential to any change. Those that follow the steps are more likely to succeed. Perseverance is also a key. Mistakes and failure are part of the process, but you decide whether they are learning experiences or failures.

Choose something that you would like to do to make your lifestyle healthier. It might be healthy eating, more rest, more recreation, or exercising. You need to determine where you are in the process of change. You may not be at the action stage yet. In the space below identify the essential stages for this particular change to take place. Mark where you are in the process with an "X".

Example: I want to eat healthier.

Pre-contemplative – My weight is fine for me.

Contemplative – Maybe I should lose a little weight.

X Preparation – I will select a diet, but I know that hasn't worked in the past.

Commitment – I will get the help and support of my partner for starting my diet today.

Goal Setting – I will lose 15 pounds over three months.

Action – I joined weight watchers today.

Evaluation – My plan is going about the way I expected and I plan to continue it.

Maintenance – I love the way I look. The diet isn't really that bad to follow. I will reward myself with a new dress when I lose ____ pounds.

Where are you in your process? Fill in the blanks to correspond with the stages of *your* own journey.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

Make a plan to help you move to the next stage of change.

Be honest about where you are in the process and then ask someone to review your stages and plan. What will you do to reinforce or reward your progress?

Do not move to the next item that you want to change until you have successfully completed the first project. Success breeds success. Use what you learn from the first process to help you in the next change. What have you learned so far?

If you are contemplating an action that makes you afraid or anxious, you may say to yourself that you are too scared to take that step or action. Ask yourself, "What is the worst thing that can happen if I do this?" When you determine what that is, say to yourself, "If that happens, can I handle it?" The answer is almost always, "yes." If you can handle the worse case scenario, anything less than that will be a piece of cake.

For instance, I may be afraid to speak in public. What is the worse thing that could happen if I speak in public? I might make a fool of myself. Can I handle that? Of course I can! So, anything less disastrous than that, I can also handle.

Let me relate a story. The first time I spoke in public was at a conference in Florida. I was scared to death. It was before I understood the techniques. I got through my talk, which was 20 minutes long. I remembered nothing, but went straight to my room and threw up. I was nauseated for 24 hours. I got an early flight home hoping I would not have to use one of those air sickness bags. I was truly afraid to speak in public again—and I could have let that stop any further attempts to speak in public, but I didn't. I let potential success and rehearsal dominate my thoughts instead of what I saw as a miserable aftermath. It worked! That is why I believe in these techniques.

Write about something that you are afraid to do. What is the worst thing that can happen?

[illegible]

If that happens, can you manage it? How?

[illegible]

If yes, then move on. Everything else will be easy for you.

Imagine yourself completing the task that frightens you. See every detail. Rehearse it in your mind while taking deep, relaxing breaths. Rehearse until the task is completed. Congratulate yourself when done. What did you learn?

[illegible]



Using Relaxation Techniques

There are several relaxation techniques: deep muscle relaxation, hypnosis, meditation and guided imagery. They all involve an altered state of consciousness. They can be used to reach your inner wisdom and achieve relaxation.

Deep muscle relaxation involves relaxing all of your muscle groups, one group at a time, starting at your feet. There are many tapes and CDs to help you learn to do this.

Meditation involves concentration on a single word or sound (ohm), attending to your breathing, or counting your breaths. Depak Chopra says that in the gap between thoughts, all the wisdom of the universe lies. To get there, you must quiet your mind and reduce or eliminate all the chatter

that goes on in your head all the time. This can be a daily practice.

Guided imagery involves vividly imagining something or some place in your mind. You can also learn this through a CD or tape.

Any time you use relaxation or meditation techniques, it is important to create a safe place in your mind as a first step. This is because some of us have scary memories that can intrude on our quiet time and we need to be able to move away to a safer, more pleasant environment when needed. Take a few minutes to think about a place you can go to in your mind that you find very relaxing.

Imagine the details. Be in touch with the pleasant and safe feelings it generates. Your safe place is a retreat to help you gain strength, courage and peace.

Write about or draw your safe place

Some common relaxation techniques include:

- Deep breathing starts the relaxation response. I use the 7-7-7 technique. Breathe in to the count of 7; hold your breath to the count of 7; and breathe out to the count of 7. Do this three times. Then visualize a safe and peaceful place and see yourself there.
- Counting your breaths.
- Counting the minutes on a clock backwards while picturing the clock in your head. If a thought interrupts your counting, you must start over again.
- Attempting to breathe in one nostril and out the other. If you master this, try breathing in through your nostrils and out through your ears. (Just kidding!)
- Repeating “in with the good” and “out with the bad” to coincide with your breathing.

If you practice, you can achieve the relaxation response any time you choose.

Other ideas include:

- Chamomile tea
- Lavender scent
- Soft music to help you go to sleep
- Valerian supplements to help with sleep
- When you smile (whether you feel like it or not), you generate endorphins that can make you feel better
- Laughter is good medicine
- Watching a good movie
- Listening to your favorite music
- Exercise can reduce stress chemicals in your body

Positive affirmations can give you encouragement and positive feelings. If you have a set of affirmations, read one or two a day.

Some examples include:

- I can do it
- I am beautiful
- I am strong
- I am a child of the universe
- I am a child of God, Allah, or Buddha
- God/Allah/Buddha loves me
- I won't hide my light under a basket
- Nothing can stop me

Add some of your favorites:

When I was 35, I remarried. Soon after that, Rick and I became disillusioned with our jobs. Consequently, we sold everything we owned and set out to see this wonderful country on a motorcycle. We have a beautiful, diverse county. I hope you have time to get out to see it. But, after about three or four months, we were tired and plagued with thoughts like, "We should settle down and start a new life."

We had felt that twinge that said, "You have reached a crossroad." We had questions like: What do we still need to do? What have we learned so far? What do I want; what does he want? How much time do we have to do what we want to do? It was an exciting, scary time with new horizons and great adventures.

In a culture obsessed with youth, this time can generate fear and crisis for many. As we approached 40, we noticed more gray hairs, extra weight, wrinkles, and we needed longer arms to read well. It was a time of disassembling. It was also a time for "seeing the light" and for renewal. We were shaken into a re-examination of our lives and we came out on the other side with a new sense of self and vitality.

We reassessed our careers in terms of what was

realistic, but also what we liked to do. We asked ourselves, "What is something we have always wanted to do that we have not done yet? Do we want to scuba dive, write, open a restaurant, take ballet, garden, or learn Karate? What do we really want to do?" We finally bought a little country store in the Appalachian mountains about 35 miles from where we started our midlife trip across the country.

We took up Karate and achieved brown belts. We did more social work out of that country store than you can imagine. Our store was the first place many in the tiny rural community brought new babies and the first place they came with problems. We did the best we could with what we knew then. It was a good down to earth life, but it was often also a hard life. We made lots of mistakes and we learned much.

Mid-life people often take up neglected interests or start new careers. When people only lived to be 40 or 45, there was no opportunity for a second career or a new undertaking. Today, many people are vital and active into their 80's. This leaves plenty of time for a new venture in the second half of life. We said to each other, "Let's think of something that we have always wanted to do, but could not find the time. Maybe, now is

“Every day is precious, live every moment and please take care of your health, we can’t take another day like this.”

a time to follow old passions and dreams. This can be the most exciting time of our lives.”

At 42 I decided to go back to school. Almost everyone in my classes were in their 20’s. They looked like teenagers to me, but they were so bright. It seemed as if learning and staying up all night to study came so much easier for them than for me. But, I made it through. I often thought about giving up, but I just kept going. I was 48 years old when I received my Ph.D. from the University of Maryland, Baltimore Campus in 1995.

Mid-life was a time when every unresolved loose end of our lives rose up to the forefront. It was a time to consolidate the totality of who we were. Every suppressed thought, feeling, or action confronted us now. Buried parts of ourselves demanded to be heard. We found ourselves face to face with those traits that, in our youth, we called our faults or darker side. Facing up to our shortcomings can be very disconcerting. However, we began to see the value of those long forgotten pieces of ourselves.

In the search for ourselves, we disassembled the people who we had become in order to please parents, grandparents, and children. We

now reassembled ourselves and included all the parts, previously wanted or unwanted. The new, reassembled people were much more than the old ones could ever hope to be: wiser, more stable, more skilled, more humble, and with more to offer.

The recklessness of our youth carried with it an energy and creativity that we wished to regain without some of the mistakes that go with youth. The rigidity that we gave up years ago, when renewed, helped us organize our lives. The simplicity of an earlier life took us back to basics. I tell people, “I am a child of the ‘60s. We thought we could change the world and maybe we will.”

In the back of our minds was always an ill-formulated dream. I have wanted to be a writer since I was old enough to hold a pencil. But, of course, writing is not a “practical” career. And you must have talent and perseverance and enough money to live on while you are “making it.” I was not sure I had those things, until now. I decided that I could be anything I wanted to be. I decided that I would do whatever it took to get where I was going. I felt I had a mission.

Once I had my license as a psychologist, I worked in an adult male prison for a while, but then

decided to start my own mental health practice. Shore Counseling ended in about a year. We were broke and unable to make a go of it. Then, I worked as a psychologist for someone else for a while and I was not satisfied. Consequently, I decided to try my hand again at a mental health practice. My belief was that all children, rich or poor, deserved the best mental health services, regardless of ability to pay.

The most important words for me in mid-life were “Let go of old restrictive thoughts and beliefs. Move away from external validation to internal validation. Find peace within yourself.” I was reborn with a greater capacity to love myself (all of me) and others, as well.

It is a paradox that when we reach our prime, we realize that the end is in sight. I became aware of a change in my sense of time. This became a decade where the by-word was “hit the deck running.” I felt that there were only a limited number of years to complete my life long goals. Women who have concentrated on careers and have delayed having families and children feel that their biological clock is running out. Women who have been primarily caregivers following someone else’s dream now see new opportunities for careers and creativity. I shouted, “It’s my turn! I can choose to focus my energy on a life-long love of psychology, research, teaching, writing, or whatever I want. Yeah!”

At 53 years of age I had a wonderful, loving, supportive family. I opened a new mental health practice, Eastern Shore Psychological Services (ESPS). My son’s mother-in-law was

my secretary. My best friend was my program director and my niece was a therapist. The year was 1999. I had 5 employees.

In 2000, I began to notice many similarities among children who had problems with violence. I researched and developed the CARE, Child and Adolescent Risk Evaluation. Research Press published it in 2003. It became the CARE2 in 2008. I wrote several articles about my research and spoke at many national conferences. I wrote my first book, *How Children Become Violent: Keeping Your Kids Out of Gangs, Cults, and Terrorist Organizations*. I found my dream to write producing scientific articles, books, and poetry.

I was able to borrow some money from the bank and from a friend to support ESPS, but it was not nearly enough. So, I “maxed” out my credit cards and kept on going. By 2004, ESPS had 100 employees and 4 locations. Our services included a home visiting program for new parents, mental health services, psychological evaluations, school-based mental health, case management services, and a small school called Hope Creek. We still had not made a profit, but we were close to breaking even. We will likely make a profit this year and we have done a lot of good work and helped many families. We are known for our good work and I have a wonderful and loyal staff. We have had many trials, including a couple of late paychecks, but many original employees still stick with me. It’s a miracle and a testament to their integrity and dedication. At one point, I borrowed money from “Count Me In,” a wonderful New York organization that lends money to women entrepreneurs. This helped keep us going.

My children and grandchildren are not so late in my story because they are less important—their lives are intertwined with my journey. I love them with all my heart. Sometimes I feel like they fill my heart so much it could burst. All of our children and grandchildren have been loving and caring, even though I don't spend as much time with them as I would like.

But this isn't the end of the story. I scraped every nickel I could find to go to South Africa with a group of social psychologists from the People to People program. I was changed by that trip. The South African people are struggling to survive and do good work with far less resources than we have in the US and their hope and faith is huge and almost palpable. The experience of the South African history, people, and landscape touched my heart forever. I returned to the US enriched and energized.

I came back with a renewed hope of supporting change in Maryland's public mental health system, so that all children and families receive the best care. It is not enough to say poor children don't count. It is not okay to say that abused, neglected, traumatized, and mentally ill children do not deserve or need quality services. As long as there is a breath in me, the fight for better health care for poor children will go on and so will ESPS.

I also made a guided imagery CD and journal. A talented friend helped me put it together and produce it under Soulight Publishing. Then something happened that caused me to write this post script. At ESPS we had a bookkeeping



person we called Uncle Dave. He was a large burley man with a great sense of humor and a heart as big as Texas. One Wednesday, I was working in my office. I heard someone shouting, "Dave needs help!" I ran down the hall to his office shouting, "Call 911, we need an ambulance, NOW!" Dave was slumped in his chair and he was lifeless. His face was turning grey. Three women from the office could not get him out of his chair into the floor. With Rick's help, we laid him down. I felt for a pulse. There was no pulse. I was thinking, "There has to be a pulse. I'm doing this all wrong." As if coming from a long way away, I heard Rick say, "Start CPR. Give him breaths!" Rick began compressions. We worked for what seemed like hours and a few minutes all at once. The paramedics arrived and continued to work. They moved him to the ambulance and then to the hospital where he died. For two and a half days, my staff walked around as if they were in a daze. Not long after that, our friend, Bob, also an ESPS employee, was killed in a car accident. We were like a close family and we thought our hearts would break.

In the ensuing days people said to each other, "Every day is precious, live every moment and

please take care of your health, we can't take another day like this." So, I sit here and write the end of this chapter of my story. While only a very broad stroke, this has been my story. I hope you enjoyed it and take something of value from it. Remember, life is for living. The opportunities are endless. Enjoy the train ride and where ever you are going in life and GO FOR IT!!



**Take a relaxing walk
with your partner.**

About the Author

Kathryn Seifert received her Ph.D. from the University of Maryland, Baltimore Campus in 1995. President of the Maryland Psychological Association (MPA) and representative to the Mental Health Association of Maryland, she advocates for the highest quality services for all children needing mental health treatment.

Dr. Seifert has had over 30 years experience in mental health, addictions, and criminal justice work. In addition to creating the Juvenile CARE (Child and Adolescent Risk Evaluation), Dr. Seifert has authored articles and lectured nationally and internationally on family violence and trauma. She founded Eastern Shore Psychological Services, a multidisciplinary private practice that specializes in working with high-risk youth and their families. She also lectures on violence assessment, suicide prevention, and stress management.

Dr. Seifert has created a line of guided imagery and relaxation CDs and guided journals. Her website is <http://careforusall.com>. You can email her at drkathy2@cs.com.



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