

Examining Your Beliefs to Manage Stress

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Overview

Your world view

Your world view is your basic beliefs about human nature, how the world works, and what life is about. It can cause stress when a long-held belief is challenged or contradicted by a new experience or when most of the people around you hold a very different world view.

To help clarify your world view, answer these questions:

- How do you see people? Are they good? Selfish? Insecure? Fair?
- How do you see life? Is it fair? Surprising? Interesting? Difficult?
- How do you see society? Is it going in the "right" direction? Are there insurmountable problems?
- Do you have strong spiritual beliefs? What are they?
- Do the actions you see every day support how you see people, life, or society?
- Do you feel the world is moving away from your spiritual beliefs?

Your values

Your values are what you think is important in life. We often share our family's values. But sometimes we decide to reject values that were given to us, or we opt to change their priority in our lives. For example, you might value financial success much more or less than your family or society expects you to.

Your values can cause stress when you spend a lot of time and energy doing things that are not important to you or when two values conflict. For example, values related to family and career are in conflict for many people.

To help clarify your values, answer these questions:

- What values are important to you? Honesty? Compassion? Friendship? Success?
- How are these values expressed in your life?
- Are any of your values in conflict with how you behave?
- Are any of your values in conflict with your job, friendships, or relationships?

Your goals

Your goals are what you want to accomplish in your life. You can have short-term goals and long-term goals. It

is important to try to make them both appropriate and meaningful. You also want to be able to reach your goals, but not so easily that you feel unfulfilled after you meet them. Your goals can help you figure out how you spend your time and energy. Be sure that your goals reflect your beliefs and values, not those of your parents, family, or friends.

Your goals can cause stress when you feel you are not moving toward them or that they are outdated. Your goals may also cause stress if they are very big.

To help clarify your goals, answer these questions:

- What are some of your daily and weekly goals?
- What are your goals for the year?
- What goals do you have for the next 5 to 10 years?
- How are you meeting your goals?
- Are any of your goals in conflict with the way you are living your life?
- How do you make time for your goals in your life?

Answering these questions may not solve any short-term, stress-related problems. And it may feel stressful to try to answer them at first. But it can help you identify sources of stress that you hadn't thought about before. And it can help with long-term stress issues by getting you started with the process of thinking about the core issues behind your stress. It can also help to talk about these things with a supportive friend or a counselor.

Credits

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