



## **SOME THOUGHTS ON STRESS**

During the Katrina Hurricane disaster, I read about a couple who migrated from Louisiana to the State of Florida. They were very fortunate that their home and cars were untouched but because of the threat of disease, they were forced to leave. The husband, a Navy man, packed what belongings they could salvage to stay with a friend. Their car was parked in a lot within view of their motel dwelling unit. The next morning, the wife noticed that their car containing over \$10,000 worth of belongings was missing. Although it was later found, their belongings were stolen. He was beginning to feel angry but realized that he could do nothing about the occurrence. He realized that he needed all the energy he could muster to do what was needed for his wife and children.

A “double whammy”! How much stress can people endure? In my research and work with people to help them manage the stress in their lives, I was always amazed at the resilience of the human spirit in the midst of misfortune. Although they are hard pressed to realize it because of the trauma of whatever befalls them, people demonstrate amazing strength and endurance. It seems that the thrust of the stress enables them to gather their resources to deal with whatever the circumstances might be. It might be after the fact that they will feel very vulnerable and incapable of functioning for a time but not during the episode.

I remember a time when, as a new parent, I heard my son thrashing in his bed shortly after his bedtime. I ran up the stairs to find him having a convulsive seizure. I had never experienced anything like this but somehow remembered reading about placing the child in lukewarm water. My wife followed me and although she was a nurse, she panicked. I told her to hold the child while I drew the bathwater. Then I placed him in the tub, splashing the water over his body. In the meantime, after running to a neighbor’s for help and returning, my son was fine and I handed him over to my wife who had since calmed down. As I sat on the tub’s edge, I felt faint and my neighbor grabbed me and stabilized my balance preventing my fall into the tub.

I don’t know how I remembered reading about treating a convulsive reaction but it was some time previous to the incident. I don’t know how I had the presence of mind to calmly implement the solution in the midst of the frightening episode but I did. I don’t know why my wife was prone to panic while I was calm and why I “folded” when she recovered but it all happened as I described it. Now, I know that the endorphins that come into play offer a

physiological explanation but there is also a psychological element that takes over enabling those kinds of reactions as well.

I would define stress as *the result of an event that occurs over which we have little or no control*. It would seem that the keyword here is “control”. The more that we need to maintain our need to be in control, the less able we are to deal with whatever the stress is that might come our way. The reason for this is that our control tends to make us tense and limits our ability to accept what has happened and go on from there. The reality of an occurrence is very difficult to accept. However, *it did happen!* Once we can accept reality for what it really is, we can then begin to apply whatever remedies to the occurrence that might be necessary. Many of us experience difficulty accepting reality and try to change it in order to feel better otherwise called *avoidance*. It’s like a “temporary fix” that helps us to feel better for a period of time. Although avoidance is a normal and natural phenomenon allowing us to recover from certain traumas but if it becomes a way life, it will interfere with our ability to adjust by taking care of whatever the stress might be. Avoidance doesn’t change reality but it can give us time to recover from trauma so that we can “take care of business”.

Here are some points to consider:

- Remember a time when you calmly dealt with a stressful situation and what the outcome was;
- Remember a time when you over-reacted during a stressful situation and what the outcome was;
- Try to determine what the differences were between the two examples;
- Remember a time when you had a tendency to avoid a situation but instead decided to deal with it forthrightly.

### **A Brief Biographical History**

*After an over 40 year career as a professional psychotherapist and Director of The Sports Stress Clinic in Amherst, NY, Charles Bonasera came to Florida and decided to use the benefits of his previous professional experiences in his new roles of Consultant in Life Management and Business Coaching as well as his expertise as a Motivational Speaker. He once again became involved with athletes in different sports training them with his techniques to help them develop and maintain focus as well as staying in their zone. Much of his training methods are derived from the CD collection he developed under the heading of WIN-WIN SECRETS as the President of Personal Identity Controls. This collection consists of thirty-six programs dealing with vital issues in the management of stress.*

*Another role that he adopted to add to his professional career was that of Author. Early in the 1980’s he wrote Guide to a Life Management Process which he has re-written as a workbook to successfully help people manage their stress which includes his own Working Model. As a result in his interest in golf and realizing that it was essentially a “mind game”, he wrote The Mental Side of Golf which can benefit the beginner as well as professionals playing the game of golf.*

*He then compiled over five-hundred sayings that he had developed in the course of his professional career as stimuli to help people change patterns in their lives entitled How to Stay Well and Live Life to the Fullest. This was followed by a book documenting case studies around disruptive life patterns including ways to change them under the name of How in the Hell Did This Happen to Me? Both his personal involvement in sports as a participant, coach, manager and in his role in officiating, inspired him to write a primer for parents and coaches entitled The Legend of Little League.*

*Charles invites you to view his website at [www.charlesmbonasera.com](http://www.charlesmbonasera.com) as well as to write with your comments and questions to his e-mail address ([charles@charlesmbonasera.com](mailto:charles@charlesmbonasera.com)). He would also be very happy to communicate with his readers by telephone should they desire. His professional motto is “seeking alternative methods to happiness” and wishes those touched by his words to practice the three secrets to a happy life: “enjoy life and enjoy it thoroughly ... develop and maintain a sense of humor ... bring as much love into your life as possible.*