

EPISODE VII -THE HIDDEN JEWEL -The Gospel of Stress Science. THE NAKED TRUTH

Dagne: Hello again! I'm Dagne Crane. Welcome to our 4th video webcast, Episode 7 of the Infinite Potentials Series. Stress Management - The Ground from which Creativity, Health, Energy and Longevity Grows. So, Adam, tell us more about the gospel of stress science.

Adam: Doesn't gospel imply good news?

D: It does. What makes it such good news?

A: Many people lose hope and are crushed by the adversities of life. Most of us at one time or another feel like there is so little we can control. The good news is that stress science is relatively easy to learn, virtually free and fun to do.

D: I wonder why more people don't work at it. There is a cost in that it takes learning, focus and work. But the pay off is enormous. Stress science truly is a hidden jewel - a buried treasure.

A: Our friend Sam told us about buried treasure in his hometown, Shreveport LA. People discovered they owned the mineral rights on their property. When they heard there is gas underground all over Shreveport they invited energy companies to drill baby, drill! Quite a few hit gas and became instant millionaires. They were literally sitting on buried riches. That's a metaphor for the hidden treasure, the gospel, the good news - that even modest stress management skills deliver a huge pay off... quickly, easily, beautifully.

In Episode 5 on Economic Order we discussed how, when one looks carefully - relaxes and clears his mind - (s)he almost always discovers that there are far more resources available than he realized before doing the arithmetic. We are talking about readily available wealth most people don't realize they have.

D: What about Sam, did he strike gas?

A: I asked him and he said he is producing substantial amounts of carbon dioxide and methane laced with hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, hydrogen sulfide, and dimethyl sulfide. However, unlike his neighbors, he attributes his success to the many excellent Cajun and Mexican restaurants in Shreveport.

D: Do you think ordinary people can become extraordinarily good at managing stress - that is change - as we discussed in Episode 6?

A: Of course, but they must realize that learning how to managing stress well is critically important. Or put more positively - claiming this treasure for themselves will transform the quality of their priceless life. Suffering is massively reduced and transformed into fuel for living.

D: Specifically, what must be learned, accomplished in order to reduce the bad stress or change; so we can get more of the good or healthy stress - change?

A: It means continuously reducing the fight or flight response all you can, all the time, every day.

D: Don't we need the fight or flight response in order to avoid danger?

A: Not really. Intelligence works much better. The fight or flight response evolved in order to give us a little extra boost, adrenaline, energy to help save our life in fast-moving, life-threatening situations. If the only time we used the fight or flight response was when we are facing true physical danger then self destructive stress would virtually disappear. But unfortunately a side effect of our advanced thinking capability is that the fight or flight response is also triggered by thoughts which have nothing to do with true physical emergencies. Anxious thoughts like fear of losing a job, insults, worry, poor self-images, etc. - can trigger fight or flight day and night and that is a disaster. It ruins our daily life and often kills us.

D: So, the idea is to reduce the fight or flight response. But what happens in an actual, life threatening situation?

A: One of the most important training principles in martial arts, yoga and virtually all forms of meditation is teaching how to reduce the fight or flight response as much as possible all the time - everyday. Master warriors realized long ago that reducing the fight or flight response during a real life or death emergency led to more intelligent, faster, more powerful, victorious outcomes. Western science recognizes that there are poorly understood capabilities called "subtle energies" which can be activated in human beings under the right conditions. These powerful energies require a calm, focused mind. So skilled warriors learn to relax the muscles, regulate the breathing and bring all of the mind into the present. This process reduces fear, increases speed, focus and power to meet the challenge. Reducing fight or flight response is a critical aspect of what the famous peak performance psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls "Flow".

D: Is this the same as mindfulness?

A: I would say that flow emerges as a special state or quality within the wider field of mindfulness.

D: In Episode 6 we discussed a simple way to look at reducing unhealthy change or stress: Work with the voluntary nervous system - the muscles, then the autonomic or emotional system by using breathing, and finally the central nervous system through imagery and awareness and mindfulness. So, tell us more about how to improve those skills.

A: Start with the muscle system by learning the key or "signal muscles" and if you use biofeedback instruments you can speed and deepen your learning immensely.

D: What do you mean by "signal muscles"?

A: Certain muscles are first to become too tense when the unhealthy stress response is just beginning and they become even more tense as the maladaptive stress response continues over time. Key "signal muscles" are the mastoid - jaw, the muscles of the face and eyes, the extensors

in the fore arm, the trapezius - shoulders raise unnecessarily. There are many other signals that become loud and clear if you simply train yourself to be aware of them.

D: Like posture.

A: Perfect! Unhealthy stress degrades posture and gives many other signals.

D: So once you are aware of the signal what do you do? Does improving the posture reduce unhealthy stress? Of course, relax whatever muscle is signaling you.

A: Bingo! Simply start undoing what has begun to malfunction. And do it as soon as possible. The earlier you realize fight or flight has begun the easier it is to reverse.

D: Relax the jaw, lower the shoulders, stand straight. Take a deep breath.

A: By taking a deep breath, relaxing muscles you have begun to modify, or fix what is wrong with the autonomic or emotional system.

D: So, by first relaxing the muscles and correcting my posture I am step by step going from the outside inward. How can we master correct breathing?

A: Mastering breathing is probably one of the most powerful skills anyone can learn. But we are not talking about mastering breathing here but rather learning some basic breathing skills. Applying basic breathing skills increases energy and clears the mind. Just realizing that we breath too shallow when stressed means we only have to breath deep and already we get a huge benefit. A clear mind becomes interested in learning to take this free, amazing, life improvement strategy called breathing to higher levels of skill.

D: Breathing then effects the central nervous system. One is able to pay attention better and think more coherently. We devote a whole episode to the Breath Work.

A: As performance improves so does quality of life.

D: What was that Greek word? Eudaimonia? A balanced, creative, thriving life...probably also filled with good laughs!

A: One learns to meet the adversities of life with more spirit, increasing competence, greater humanity....like you say, laughter, fun!

D: Biofeedback, "**The Technology of Self Knowledge**" can also be used to increase self - regulation skills of the autonomic and central nervous systems. Can you explain how?

A: Of course, but it would take too long for this Episode. We've already discussed muscle feedback instruments. But instruments such as temperature, skin conductance, heart rate as well as respirometers and inspirometers for breath learning can improve self - regulation of the

autonomic nervous system, neurofeedback for self - regulating brain activity and improving creativity has been used by hundreds of thousands of people already.

D: And there are thousands of practitioners available to help anyone interested. Many of whom you trained! Relaxing the muscles, breathing deeply and smoothly clears the mind increasing awareness and creativity.

A: Seems simple. This process reduces suffering and brings more aliveness. Yet there are so many struggling and suffering so much.

D: And missing out on the fun and the happiness possible. When we use words like fun and happiness could we substitute the word energy?

A: That's a great insight and a simplification. It takes enormous energy to live creatively which is the key to happiness and fun. How do we get that energy?

D: That's what the Infinite Potential Episodes are teaching.

A: "Life is a banquet yet most people are crawling around under the table eating crumbs."

D: Talk to us about aging and stress science. You and I have been trying to figure out how to do the best job we can with our own aging process for at least 40 years. The older we get the harder we work at it. Because the challenge is greater. "Aging ain't for sissies".

A: If you are not getting older you are dead. Probably the most common skill shared by people who live long healthy lives is that they all practice exceptionally effective strategies for managing the stress in their lives.

D: Are these strategies mental or physical?

A: Psychophysiological means both. Long - lived people inevitably have some kind of philosophical or spiritual set of beliefs which help them calm their minds, face the endless challenges of being alive and give them some feeling of peace. The physical aspects include some or all of the basics that we're explaining in this series. It's self-defeating to separate the physical and mental.

D: When we become aware that stress is damaging us and we have to consciously figure out how we are going to deal with it, what should we focus on?

A: The Infinite Potentials Series is our attempt to make this process as clear as we can. The entire Infinite Potentials Wheel of Opportunity is our effort to develop a practical stress science - a kind of Radical Stress Strategies Super School.

D: So, Episode 8 will be Exercise, after that Attention, The Breath Work and Sleep Science. We have already done Economic Order, next comes Love, Meditation and Contemplation, then Radical Life Extension, and finally Radical Stress Training or Learning. (end voice over)

A: Besides, enhancing aging - reducing the maladaptive stress response strengthens the immune system. Research shows that people who have average stress management skills become ill with some kind of stress related disorder in direct proportion to how intense the maladaptive stress is and how long it is endured. For example, the Holmes / Rahe Scale rates life events from a minor violation of the law (11 points), to change in financial state (38 points), to death of a spouse (100 points). It turns out that if a person with average stress management skills gets about 300 points within a year there is a high probability that they will get a severe stress related disorder within the following 18 months.

D: But if the skills are developed to above average then the same stress (think change) will not make you as sick and you can even learn to transform stress to fuel for thriving.

A: Right! Crisis means both danger and opportunity. There is a saying in martial arts that your worst enemy may be your best teacher.

D: That which doesn't kill you can make you stronger. What else about learning and applying stress science comes to mind?

A: One of the greatest benefits is creativity.

D: Reducing unhealthy stress helps us live more creative lives. How?

A: Reducing the maladaptive stress response reduces loss of energy which leads to increased awareness. Being more conscious, thinking coherently and living creatively requires tremendous energy.

D: One of the tough things about getting older is the sense that one is losing energy.

A: Tell me about it. Sometimes it can feel like the life force is draining out.

D: So, how can we fight it?

A: I should be asking you since you are handling aging so beautifully. Fighting the loss of energy may not be the best way to think because one of the best ways to slow down loss of energy is to reduce conflict. Fighting implies conflict. I think seeing the truth of our condition of aging and harmonizing with nature feels more like dancing, having fun, and is much more effective.

D: We are so grateful for the lives we have. There is even a sense of excitement about the adventure of this stage of life. This brings us back to some of the issues we dealt with during the two episodes we devoted to Economic Order. Like living as simply as possible and doing - so much as you can - work you love.

A: Think how important economic order is within the context of the huge health care struggle we have in the U.S. Most of us cannot afford the expensive, "Cadillac" personal health insurance

plans. We all have to make the most of whatever health insurance we can afford. A healthy life style and application of stress science reduce personal health care costs more than any other strategy.

D: Your quality of life and ability to make a living depends on your ability to handle your own stress.

A: And helping out those you love.

D: A lot of people fear the circumstances of their lives are too difficult. They're afraid they just can't make changes in their lives that make a real difference.

A: They feel they have been dealt a losing hand.

D: You can't change the hand you're dealt but you can change the way you play it.

A: It seems you can even change the hand you've been dealt.

D: How so? What's done is done. Isn't it?

A: Research shows that we are born with a specific - apparently fixed gene structure. However, scientists have demonstrated that the way we behave - the way we play the hand we have been dealt - the choices we make in life determine which genes are turned on and which lie dormant or are turned off. Turning on or off genes changes the body and changes the way genes influence brain cells. In essence science is proving that the way we play our hand can cause mental and physical transformation - change the hand we have been dealt.

D: Doesn't that mean we can actually influence our own evolution? That's incredible!

A: If you have genes that cause you to have a propensity for diabetes or heart trouble or cancer or vibrant health your behavior can influence whether those genes are turned on or off.

D: I think that takes stress science and self - regulation to a whole new level.

A: People who want to improve their lives must see that becoming good at stress management and self - regulation does not require money but does require paying the price of learning and implementing what they have learned.

D: Will people pay the price?

A: Of course, at least some will. People will pay to see the truth - even if its because she is naked.

A: Tell the story of how you found our mysterious, naked lady.

D: I was looking at paintings in a gallery in Los Angeles. The owner of the gallery felt she was worthless so he threw darts at her. I loved her so I rescued her.

A: Who is the artist?

D: Hard to read the signature. Looks like Ao or Co Krana or Kranc, 1933.

A: What did you pay for her?

D: \$125.

A: She's priceless

D: The naked truth?

A: The mysterious, naked truth!