

# A Surprising Way to Control Stress

There are many ways to handle stress. The important thing is to not let it get to you.

If you are one of these chronically stressed people, here is one thing you can do:

Expect It.

Huh? Yeah. That's right. Expect it. Accept it as part of living. Life is full of surprises that one can't control. Get used to it. Fortunately, those aren't the main sources of most folks' excessive stress. What is the main source? An unreasonable expectation that life can and should be simple and relaxed. It is not.

The Great Barrier Reef off the NE coast of Australia is teeming with life, full of all manners of plant and animal life. It is home to the great white shark and some of the most beautiful species in all the oceans. The water here is *rough*, difficult; the underwater terrain treacherous.

Not far away is another area where the waters are placid. Calm. Peaceful. The terrain a sand bottom. But the sea life is dull, certainly not colorful. The number of species fewer. But it looks to the unobservant to be the more desirable of the two.

Your practice and your life are certainly similar to these two vastly different environments. If you choose the rough water of life, you choose to participate, to be an active player who understands that if you want to *really* play, one must accept that the water is rough and learn to enjoy the thrills and spills of living. The rough water is part of life. It can't be ignored or discounted or not accepted for what it is. The other choice is to continually reject and be upset with it. This is silly. Life's vicissitudes are a lot like gravity. You can reject it, but still the object falls to the earth every time. Count on life to have rough waters as much as you can count on gravity to bring objects back to earth.

A case in point, my wife and I have a large house: 3 floors and 7 bedrooms. When all of our 5 children were home and growing up, the place could get rough, lots of noise, activity and often arguments and bickering back and forth among the children. To this day, I still don't enjoy the fights over who wore whose clothes! But it was full of life, activity, energy and joy.

Now the house has only two children left home. Much quieter. Less full of life. My wife, one day, had the realization that she liked it better the other way. She said, "It's too quiet."

**Too little activity is more dangerous to one's health and happiness than too much.** Now, when the children come home, they are welcomed. Don't tell my kids, but I would rather have the bickering and the laughter than the quiet and relatively placid environment of their absence! Yes, home life is "rougher", but a lot more fun.

Your practice is much the same way. You either create the specific stressors you want to have: the good problems. Or you let practice dictate its problems to you. You become reactive, on the defensive, rejecting the problems as if someone else was responsible for their creation.

A case in point: would you rather have too few patients or deal with the problem of too many! Look at all the choices you have when you have too many. You could learn to become faster, more efficient. Raise your fees. Stop feeling needy to have case acceptance, increase your choices of what you want to do. Patients are clamoring for appointments with you.

When you have too few, you become needy, forcing case acceptance (which always works against you financially and emotionally.) You get bored because you aren't as busy as you would like. *The problem of too much is generally easier to handle than too little.* Get busy and create the right kind of problems.