

DEALING WITH CURRENT STRESS — OUT OF CHAOS COMES CLARITY!

By Ellen Harris, LMHC, CEAP

No doubt! We're going through difficult times! The news is frightening with stories of one world crisis after another – the economy, wars, famines, severe weather, or other disasters. We all know people who have lost their jobs, whose savings have dwindled, and who are experiencing the negative pressures of current events.

Someone said, “out of chaos comes clarity.” If that's true, eventually, with good old 20-20 hindsight, we may come to view today's troubles as building blocks for a better tomorrow. But, this idea doesn't alleviate the momentary pain of stress induced by today's uncertainties. Many of us feel we are living in a perpetual “fight or flight” mode.

Adversity brings out the best or worst in humankind. Some “rise to the occasion” and use their innate strengths to overcome difficulties. But, for many of us, excess stress leads to depression and fear increases our anxiety. It's not unusual to isolate ourselves and avoid pleasurable activities. We feel sad, worried, depressed, tearful, irritable or angry. We eat unhealthy food, drink in excess, and stop exercising. Unfortunately all of the above only perpetuates our bad feelings.

To end this downward cycle, we need to pay attention and become aware of self-defeating thoughts and actions. Get quiet, go within, and listen to the inner voice of wisdom. Ask, “What would I tell my best friend in this situation?” Recognize that which we can and cannot control. Learn to let go of worries beyond our control. Identify needs vs. wants. Americans are notorious for living extravagantly, and today's stresses may be a wake up call for a more temperate lifestyle. Focus on the positive. Ask yourself, “What's really important?” Be responsible and realistic, but also hopeful. Create and utilize a strong support system. Negative people have a toxic effect. Practice self care: eat a healthy diet, exercise to relieve stress, get plenty of sleep, and find ways to relax your mind and body. Remember, you are not alone. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Call for a consultation – 239-404-0862.