



A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON STRESS WITH YOUR "OTHER MIND'S EYE" by Allen C. Sargent

Go to a meeting, drop in on a conversation, talk to a friend and what do we hear so often today? "I'm just so stressed!" "I don't have time for fun anymore." "I can't handle everything." Sound familiar? We all are living with the effects of negative stress more and more in our busy lives. We each have our own unique ways of responding to stress provoking events, some responses that are useful and some that do not get us the results we want. With the discovery of Hemispheric Integration™, we now have a way to have conscious and automatic control over our actions and responses from a position of choice and flexibility. And, the techniques and processes are simple, direct and give immediate results!

For many years, the definition and effects of "The Stress Response" have been discussed and remedies have been explored. There are lifestyle changes that can reduce the effect from the body's chemicals that are released during a stress response. Visualization is one of the oldest forms of healing. It is important to understand how visualizing affects our personal well being. Science is now beginning to understand some of the reasons behind the success of positive visualizations. What we "see" in our mind's eye the body regards as if it were real. Visualizing can be used as an effective strategy for change, and Hemispheric Integration™ is a new paradigm in effective visualization.

The fact that the human body has the ability to self-correct from disease, and to adjust for changes in the environment, is becoming more obvious as we learn more about the intricate workings of the connection between mind and body. An example of this is when the external temperature drops we begin to shiver, which raises the body temperature. On the other hand, if the temperature in the environment rises we perspire, which causes evaporation on our skin to cool us down.

Just going through our daily routines there are many external visual stimuli to which our bodies react, from the stress response of seeing flashing red lights coming up behind us on the freeway, to the calmness and security of recognizing an old and trusted friend. Being able to respond appropriately to information from the external world is what keeps us safe.

The kind of stress that is beneficial to have is identified as *eustress*. It is our natural ability to be motivated for survival and advancement. Without strategically placed stress, a building would collapse. It's when the stress joints receive too much, or misplaced pressure that the structural integrity of the building is compromised. Living in California, I appreciate the importance of buildings and freeway structures having a backup system for times that the appropriate stress points might be misplaced from earthquakes.

Construction codes now include retrofitting at key points in the structure that allow the structure to "go with the flow" and after the shaking stops, to return to a state of stability.

The kind of response we are addressing with our new discoveries is *distress*. This is the physiological overreaction or build up of stressors beyond what is useful for successful living.

There are three basic areas that will initiate the stress response. The first is in response to danger, either real or perceived. The second is change, whether we consider the change to be positive or negative. The third situation that will cause the stress response is internal conflict. Any one of these three potential triggers for stress can be initiated by what we see, either externally or in our mind's eye. Nightmares and flashbacks are examples of how our mind's-eye can produce physiological responses to what we "internally" see.

The experiments Pavlov did with dogs demonstrate an example of external stimuli triggering physiological responses. After a bell was repeatedly rung prior to feeding, the dogs became conditioned to responding to the bell by salivating. Of course, it wasn't the bell that caused the dogs to salivate, it was the anticipation of the food that would come after the bell.

Knowing that we do respond internally to what we see, hear, and feel, it makes sense to have our internal images match or predict what we want to experience. If we want to be a happy, healthy person, and we have an internal image that represents that outcome, our physiology will respond accordingly.

Eustress is useful in preparing us to react to danger. *Distress* can leave us paralyzed and can actually worsen our chances of survival. Often, the difference in dealing with stress is the ability to respond to an external stimulus in a proactive way. This involves, but is not limited to, using as many of our intra-personal resources available to us at the time of the time of stress. If when we are confronted with a challenge situation, and we freeze like a "deer in the headlights," we are indeed in danger.

There are many templates and programs that help to relieve stress over time. What is often missing however is a quick and instant change of perception that will change the way we respond to the stressor in the moment, and just as important, something that is controllable by the individual.

Just as anger serves as a warning that our personal boundaries have been violated, stress serves to prepare our bodies for action. It makes no sense to be prepared for action, and then to be reactive. There is a definite difference between being responsive and reactive. Responsiveness is the ability to notice the environment, and to influence that environment in a positive way, and to take care on what is within our control. It is possible to be responsive and proactive at the same time. Reactive is avoiding taking action, often blaming or whining about how "bad things are" and generally being a victim to the event.

Since so much of our everyday stress is based on our internal perceptions of an event or external stimuli, it makes sense to have as much control of our internal perceptions as possible. In our research on the workings of the brain we have discovered that there are two related yet separate perceptions of the same event. Each is emotionally coded according to the specific qualities and interests of each hemisphere of the brain.

In the left hemisphere of the brain the information is perceived through a cognitive style of logical and linear thinking, fact, and historical information. In the right hemisphere the same event is understood through a more personal and creative cognitive style of thinking. This is where our sense of identity lives, as well as our sense of safety. How we actually respond to a situation will generally be somewhere between the two perceptions, since the left and right hemispheres of the brain communicate information back and forth through a network of fibers in the brain called the corpus callosum. Information stored in the brain from previous experiences will also have an important influence on our response to an event.

Stress can often be the result of feeling out of control. Sometimes we get so emotionally involved that we are over stimulated by the emotional right hemisphere. By having conscious access to the more linear left hemisphere, we are able to create a useful balance integrating the specialties of each hemisphere to deal with a challenge situation as our most resourceful self.

Since the most primary and vital functions of the brain involve survival and personal safety issues, the brain automatically responds to and evaluates events that might threaten a person's immediate safety. In most people, the right hemisphere of the brain stores emotionally charged memories, while at the same time, the left hemisphere records a relatively unemotional sequence of events.

There are two separate and unique pictorial representations for each event in our lives for which an external visual stimulus has been imprinted. There is one image coded in the left hemisphere, and another image coded in the right hemisphere.

Think of how often we have heard the phrase "I see it in my mind's eye." Imagine how many possibilities will be opened up by understanding your "other mind's eye!" When we recall an event with the right hemisphere's "mind's eye" our response will be very different than if we recall it with the left hemisphere's "mind's eye." Each hemisphere of the brain records and recalls useful information. If we consistently utilize the perceptions from only one side of our brain, our choices are limited, often leaving personal issues unresolved. "I have half a mind to..." is another phrase we often hear people use. If this is descriptive of what is actually happening in our thinking process, we may literally be using only half of our thinking potential at any given time.

Learning how to have conscious control of which hemispheric image to utilize broadens the range of choices and responses available to us. Additional benefits result from being able to integrate information from both hemispheres when dealing with an issue.

I'll share an example that demonstrates the speed and simplicity of how shifting internal eyes can make an instant perceptual change that defuses a stress response. When I was in Argentina presenting a training, I introduced “Unhooking from People Who Push Your Buttons” to the group. One of the women at the training went home that evening and used the process with her husband. She reported that, when he got home, her husband's heart was palpitating as he thought about the pressures he was having at work. She had him think about the situation using his other internal eye. His heart immediately slowed down, he took a deep breath, and relaxed. He said, "That's better, I'll take care of it tomorrow."

His problems at work didn't go away, but after accessing the information in the other hemisphere of his brain, he was able to be in a more resourceful state to deal with whatever was going on. His experience is similar to what I have learned to do on the freeway when someone cuts in front of me, or when the traffic is exceptionally heavy.

Simply seeing a situation from a different perspective will often be enough of a resource to help us feel empowered and be in control of our emotions.

It seems that no matter how much time and effort we spend in an attempt to be completely in control of our environment, the world doesn't always cooperate with our best-laid plans. A short time ago, my wife Marilyn and I had a chance to observe two perspectives of a stressful event that impacted us personally. For any of you reading this article who do much traveling through airports, you probably have your own stories from at least one of these passenger perspectives. Some may even have the perspective of an employee of the airline involved.

I was flying from southern Utah to Los Angeles, California. Sometime after my plane took off, fog rolled in and closed LAX to both incoming and outbound flights. My flight was diverted to Palm Springs, leaving Marilyn waiting in Los Angeles to pick me up. After I got off the plane in Palm Springs I called Marilyn on her cell phone so we could make arrangements for me to get home, since we had appointments later in the afternoon.

As an example of how hectic things were, the airline employees at the LAX ticket counter were telling Marilyn that my flight was still circling, even though I was off the flight and calling from the terminal in Palm Springs. Marilyn and I focused on getting me out on the next flight, which we were able to do by utilizing all of our communication skills and by staying in a resourceful state using our Hemispheric Integration tools. The other passengers who had been diverted, had to settle on taking a bus provided by the airlines to get to Los Angeles. Most of the people I observed where I was seemed to handle their disappointments in stride and for the most part were understanding and flexible. After all, being diverted to Palm Springs on a beautiful fall morning isn't the worst thing that has ever happened to me.

The situation at the airport in Los Angeles was a different story. Some people either ended up waiting several hours to get a seat on a later flight or took a three-hour bus ride provided by the airline. Others, however, didn't seem to appreciate the airport authority putting the criteria of safety above the need to stay on schedule, and they reacted in what can best be described as "with a mob mentality." It was as if they somehow knew that it was useless to get angry at the fog itself, and since they needed to vent their frustration they turned their anger in the direction of the ticket clerk. In one instance, this decision led to three large and healthy security agents escorting one passenger away from the gate area - possibly to have him sit in the corner until he learned to play well with others.

A third group responded to the challenging situation in a very different way. They remained resourceful to the extent that they could evaluate the situation through the filter of what they could control, and what they could influence. It would be my guess that everyone involved, including the airport authority, airline management, ticket agents, passengers and security personnel all had different plans prior to the fog rolling in. It is the individual's ability to respond to unforeseen circumstances which directs their autonomic physical response.

Now, with the techniques of Hemispheric Integration we have more control in our ability to respond in a resourceful way, no matter what the circumstances are. When we find ourselves in an unexpected stressful situation, our bodies react by introducing chemicals and other physical responses that prepare us to be proactive. This is commonly referred to as the fight or flight response, both of which can be considered proactive.

The next question would seem to be "How can I control stress once I am thrust into a stressful situation that I couldn't have foreseen?" The key is to be able to direct your perceptual attention toward the hemisphere more likely to allow you to be internally resourceful. In most cases, the logical, linear left hemisphere will tend to dissociate us from the experience. This is not the best filter in which to be proactive, and yet it can give us that brief instant that is required to detach from the "emotional hooks" that often keep us from being our best in a challenging situation. By reacting in a way that is less than our most resourceful self, the chance of making the best out of a challenging situation decreases.

The ability to direct our attention to a specific hemisphere of our brain gives us the conscious control we need to handle events, people and situations that may have in the past created a negative effect on our body and emotions.

Some of the examples of where using the processes and techniques of Hemispheric Integration are with those everyday stressors of traffic, flat tires, people who are inconsiderate or disrespectful, and hurried schedules.

We also find that in personal trauma or tragedy, and in dealing with grief, being able to direct our internal visualization and thinking can allow us to cope with the most difficult of life's challenges.

We have developed several specific processes to give us more proactive choice in our interactions. Our mission is to share these tools and techniques with others in order to begin to impact the world in a positive way. To learn more about our work we invite you to read the article *Foreground / Background* which describes one of the first ways we found to use Hemispheric Integration to unhook our initial response to people or situations who "push our buttons." We also present a two-day workshop, "The Other Mind's Eye" that is an interactive and fun way to learn the processes. Or you can order the book "The Other Mind's Eye: The Gateway to the Hidden Treasures of Your Mind".

We hope that you find the concept presented here intriguing and useful, and that we have stimulated your curiosity to join us in discovering how to have conscious access to all of the potential with our minds.

Thank You.