Keeping Calm In A Crisis

For those of us old enough to remember the television series Dad’s Army – “Don’t panic Mr Mannering” was one of Spike’s main lines – and one of my favourites! But how do we keep calm in a crisis? And how do we deal with the stressful things that come our way?

Stress is a tricky thing – it means different things to different people. And what is motivating to one person can be stressful to someone else. Put simply, stress is an emotional reaction to physical, psychological or emotional demands that are placed on us, and is often visible in the world of global mobility, both for the families relocating and those managing challenging assignments.

There are so many symptoms for stress – if you did a search on the internet you would get quite a long list – physical symptoms, behavioural, emotional and cognitive.

Symptoms can include increased irritability, severe mood changes, lack of concentration, black and white thinking, difficulty making decisions, being argumentative, losing your temper quickly, feeling overwhelmed, catching frequent colds or illnesses, trouble sleeping, tiredness, low or depressed mood, lack of energy, headaches, muscle tension, trouble relaxing, using stimulants such as alcohol to wind down etc., etc., etc. The list goes on.

So what happens to us in times of stress?
The stress response triggers adrenaline in the body – it is what gets us going – it stimulates the ‘fight, flight or freeze’ reaction in the body. Appropriate all those times of stress?

So if the stress response triggers adrenaline – it is adrenaline that gets us going – it is adrenaline that gets and keeps us motivated to do things.

So if we look at it a different way stress is actually motivation!

Things only become stressful when we exceed our personal capacity to be able to cope.

So how do we learn how to cope? The key to boosting our resilience levels is to get regular exercise, have a healthy diet – including drinking plenty of water – and to keep our mind in a calm place! Here are three quick tips…

1. Relax

Relaxation – some of us are good at it – some of us not. I know several people who just ‘don’t do’ relaxation.

It is an essential element in building up our resilience levels and our capacity for coping – for managing the stresses and strains in our lives.

Finding yourself with nothing to do – or an opportunity to sit quietly is a fantastic thing to experience. Out of sitting in boredom – without things planned in – can allow the space in our lives for new things to enter.

2. Breathe

We all have to breathe – it’s what keeps us alive! But surprise, surprise – most of us don’t do it properly. Most of us keep our breathing at the top of our chest – a shallow breath. Particularly when we are busy, anxious or just caught up in ‘stuff’ – we take shallow breaths.

Learning how to make full use of the breath is an incredible way not only to relax but also to boost your energy levels, control your emotions and achieve a sense of calm and peacefulness.

So try a different approach – try a deeper breath and see how you feel – experience the difference.

There are a few parts to this that build up – give it a go:

Full belly breathing
Place your hands on your belly – now take a deep breath in through the nose. As you breathe in – feel your belly rise and as you breathe out – through your mouth – your belly will go back down.

By doing this you are opening up your diaphragm – and allowing all your organs to get a lovely stretch and loads more oxygen into the bargain! Which means an increase in energy and vitality. Silly not to really!

7:11 breathing
7:11 breathing is a great way to relax – great to practice at all times – also great to calm the nerves before a meeting, presentation, interview, or in a crisis……

Breathe in for 7 and out for 11 – easy! Find a count that is comfortable for you – maybe in for 4 and out for 6 or 7 but make sure that your out breathe is longer than the in-breathe. Added benefits are that counting distracts your mind away from its problems! And by breathing out for longer you will automatically induce the relaxation response in your body – your body will have no alternative than to calm down.

3. Visualise

Many people don’t rate visualisation – but many people do.

Most athletes and top sports people are very open about how they practice their events in their mind – how they keep practicing – visualising – seeing themselves doing well – getting better – stronger – winning!

Visualisation is a great way to support yourself in bringing things into reality and coping with stress! Start by picturing what you want to achieve – then see yourself achieving it.

Seeing yourself achieving things – even in your mind’s eye – will boost your motivation – your brain will record and collect it – you will be improving your belief in yourself.

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