

## Stress Management: It's your Thoughts that Matter Most

This article discusses the link between stress management and the thoughts we think. This link is a crucial key in taking control of our lives and sponsoring positive emotions in our lives. Often we think that situations and events create our stress but if we are to become better at stress management we need to dig a little deeper we start to realise that we have a bigger part to play than perhaps we realise.

Stress management is a extremely subjective; what may be stressful to one person may not seem stressful to another. What is important is that most of the stress we feel, regardless of what causes it, is harmful.

If we can master stress management we'll not only live happier, healthier and more contented lives, we'll also be able to carry out our work with more focus, performing closer to our highest potential.

So what causes us to feel stressed and what is the key to stress management?

We often believe that the events in our lives are responsible for our feelings of stress and that our circumstances determine the way we feel.

To challenge this notion picture this:

You are driving down the street and someone speeds past and cuts you off. You may think to yourself: What an idiot! How dare they drive so dangerously? They should be taken off the road! You may even start to feel angry at this person, curse them or stretch out a finger or two. If I stopped you at this point and asked you why you were feeling so worked up you might say: This idiot just cut me off! How else would you like me to feel? I almost had an accident!

This is a good example of how situations can determine the way you feel. In this example a reckless driver caused you to feel angry and stressed. You have allowed yourself to become a victim to the actions of others. So why are you placing your feelings at their mercy? When do the situations or actions of others stop becoming the cause for the way you feel and at what point do you start to take control of your feelings and emotions?

The answers to these questions lie in your understanding of stress management and how your feelings and emotions come about.

The process most often works like this:

We first experience an event, situation or circumstance.

We then have a thought about the event.

We then experience an emotion about it.

Let's use our driving example to see how it fits into the event - thought -emotion process in stress management:

You are driving and someone cuts you off (event).

You think: This person should be taken off the road (thought).

You start to feel angry (emotion).

Now think about this:

It's your thought about a situation that determines the way you feel.

So how does stress relate to your choices of thought?

Stress is a feeling and what causes that feeling is what you're thinking. You don't have a stressful feeling without first having a stressful thought. This link is one of the essential keys in the art of stress management. So next time you're feeling stressed keep watch of what you're thinking.