

## **Preface**

Humanity has endured stress and suffering since its beginning, and the academic disciplines of philosophy, psychology, sociology, political science, theology, and several physical sciences have devoted themselves to understanding and resolving stress and suffering. Many of the population's most revered spiritual leaders have also devoted most, if not all, of their teachings to the same objective of lessening the mental, emotional, and physical pain that results from humankind's constant experience with the same unwanted conditions. The amount of time and energy has been well spent because all of humankind's undesirable conditions ultimately result from these two deleterious sisters of experience response.

This manuscript aims to provide mental health providers and the general public with an explanation of the cause of stress and suffering. The cause is invariably the same throughout the population spectrum, but some specifics may vary because of unique characteristics of culture, gender, or maturity. Without exception, people are motivated to "get more of what they like," but what they like will vary according to their experiences.

Before the problems of stress and suffering can be resolved, it's necessary to understand them. The first half of this writing offers an explanation of the shared problems and the second half offers examples of how the problems manifest into a variety of unwanted conditions, often distinguished as diagnoses, of mental and emotional conditions that arise from the pervasive problems. It would be highly cumbersome and unnecessary to illustrate every unwanted condition that emerges from the common problem. However, we offer the reader examples in the hopes that you may extrapolate from the samples and apply an understanding of the problem to other conditions you may encounter.

Not only is the problem pervasive and immutably the cause of all stress and suffering enjoyed by humankind, the solution for resolving the issue and, therefore, healing all of humanity, is the same. To say that a single process exists to heal all of humanity's problems may seem like too outrageous a claim to make, but, as it pertains to stress and suffering it's true. The cure for all of humanity's stress and suffering is immutably the same. The difficulty of implementing the curative process will vary widely because the very problem in need of healing obscures the processee's awareness of the cause of stress and suffering. Inherent to the stress and suffering experiencer is the condition of unconsciousness, which seemingly entrenches the problem.

The paradoxical nature of unconsciousness is one of several reasons it has been such a persistent and stubborn problem to solve. Added to unconsciousness is humanity's significant intoxication with free will, AKA the perception of separation, and creates the perception of autonomy. The perception of autonomy permits diversity and uniqueness in creation but also intensifies fear, resulting in a variety of perceptual distortions that manifest into aberrant behavior such as bellicosity.

Historically, humankind has been given guidance on how to heal the problem, but the instructions have become obscure through many translations or simply lost. A clear characterization of the problem has likewise been lost, and while different philosophers and psychologists have flirted with a relevant understanding, they have yet to accurately define the problem's cause or solution. It's not difficult to understand, but it does require a paradigm shift from conventional wisdom.

The healing process often becomes apparent by gaining a clearer understanding of the problem. Healing is a process that a person may guide another person through, professional or not, but every individual must do their own "heavy lifting." By design, no one can heal another person because there's significant learning in the initial experience and further deeper learning to be had in the healing. Life is a school and progression through the curriculum requires every student to do his/her work.

If you are a mental health professional, we hope you will undertake the healing process yourself and then apply what you have learned through personal experience to help others achieve greater happiness. It's improbable that your success in helping others will be fruitfully maximized unless you understand, through personal experience, what the people you're serving are experiencing. Life is an experiential undertaking, not an intellectual enterprise, even though understanding helps.

If you're not a mental health professional, the information provided in this writing is well within your ability to understand and self-apply, significantly benefiting your healing and increased happiness. There are no prerequisites to your recovery other than the willingness to change your self-perceptions. Resistance to changing our self-perceptions reflects the unconsciousness referenced above and the feeling of resistance should be felt and treated like any other emotional baggage.

Please enjoy the material provided herein and the healing journey you are undertaking. The journey is along the path of greater happiness. As you progress along the evolutionary path, your measure of success will always be greater happiness with the destination of bliss.

## Chapter One

### Stress and Suffering

Humankind has experienced stress since it began its experiential/evolutionary journey. Even today, stress is a significant factor in all human lives and is shared, with varying intensity, by everyone alive, but few people share the same perception of stress. Stress' most consistent common denominator is that it doesn't feel good.

This manuscript aims to explain and explore the immutable cause of stress and suffering so people may undertake the healing process and extricate themselves from its chronic re-occurrence. Suffering is repeated stress, but in this writing, we're going to focus on stress with the understanding that healing the experience of stress also heals the more enduring suffering. With variable frequency, everyone feels stress; and invariably, it doesn't feel good. But, what is stress?

Most people would agree that stress is problematic because it can cause significant emotional or physical harm to the mind and body if left unchecked. Still, those harmful disorders are the manifestations of stress and not stress itself. Succinctly defined, "*Stress is the difference between a person's expectations and the way things really are.*" When we see things (enjoy experiences) as we are, we see things through the lens of our expectations. We expect things (experiences) to be a certain way, and when our expectations aren't met, we experience stress.

All that is necessary to dispense with stress is to get rid of our expectations, see things as they are, and, forever after, experience only bliss because bliss is the absence of stress. If the only obstacles to enjoying life in the condition of bliss are our expectations, why don't we do that? What is so difficult about setting our expectations on the curb next to the weekly trash pickup and forever after being blissful? A further examination is required to understand the phenomenon of expectations.

We all have expectations, even if they're only expectations of being disappointed, but where do they come from? Did you go to the expectation store and select the package of expectations that was the most colorful or potentially appeared to be the most entertaining? Probably not. Expectations arise from experiences.

From the moment we are born, we begin to have experiences, but why? Why do humans have experiences? Imagine that you are the Creator during the planning phase of the Earth enterprise. While carefully assessing the different ingredients you might include making it an engaging, if not productive, planetary experience, you decide to incorporate experiences. Why would you do that, and what purpose would experiences serve?

Without experience, there can't be learning, so "the purpose of experiences is to provide all living things with the opportunity to learn." What can people learn about? People can only learn about themselves, a significant limitation that will help us understand stress better as we delve deeper. We often perceive that we are learning about other people, places, or things, but