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Stop the Stress Habit: Change Your Perceptions and Improve Your Health

Leslie Torburn
iUniverse (October 2008)
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If you change the way you think, you can change the way you feel. This is a common argument in self-improvement books these days, and one that forms the basis of Dr. Leslie Torburn's *Stop the Stress Habit: Change Your Perceptions and Improve Your Health.*

Torburn is a physical therapist who says that she regularly deals with people whose physical problems are caused by stress. She argues that it is people's perceptions that determine how they react and the amount of stress they feel in difficult situations. While parts of her book suggest eliminating sources of stress (quitting a stressful job to do something you love, for example), the emphasis is on how people think and how they can move on from stresses that are in the past.

Torburn reminds readers that there is no reality other than the present moment—we cannot dwell on what happened in the past or fear what might come to pass in the future. The only time we can control is right now, and in the present moment most people can find calm and stillness.

The book includes exercises that readers can use to identify their current reactions to stress and change them. One exercise, for example, suggests that readers think about a past situation as an outside observer might, in order to see the lessons of the negative experience and change their reaction to similar situations in the future.

Clearly, such changes won't be made overnight, but regular and persistent practice of such activities can make less-stressed feelings possible.

"It may be a difficult process to choose only good thoughts and immediately delete negative thoughts that sneak into our brain waves," Torburn writes. "However, we are the thinker of our own thoughts, and, with practice, we can control the content of those thoughts.

Stop the Stress Habit provides a good overview of what causes different kinds of stress, such as world events, aging, or the irritating behaviors of other people. The book is full of short, easy-to-read sections that make this an easy book to pick up when readers are feeling anxious.

People new to the idea of changing perceptions in order to change feelings may find the book useful, but those familiar with this argument from other self-help books will not find many new insights here.

SARAH WHITE (January 9, 2009)

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