



Toxic thinking and stress: What does it look like?

Your body is the living reality of everything you are, and everything you experience happens to all of you, not just to your brain.

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WHEN M (SEE ARTICLE IN INFUSION, MARCH 2011) CAME TO SEE ME, A NUMBER OF UNHEALTHY PATTERNS HAD FORMED IN HER LIFE. AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF HARMFUL STRESS, THE SUBSEQUENT BREAKDOWN, AND AN OVERWHELMING SENSE OF FAILURE AND HOPELESSNESS HAD BECOME A WAY OF LIFE.

M's symptoms were not unusual for someone in a highly stressed state: emotionally labile, tears were always close to the surface; she had withdrawn from her friends and even struggled to relate to family members, something that was beginning to cause tension and conflict between her and her husband. Feeling confused and indecisive, M was unable to make even the simplest decision without worrying it would be the wrong one. Despite being constantly tired M was not sleeping well and had resorted to medication, and at times felt like taking all the pills at once 'just to get some rest'. M wasn't suicidal, but recognised she was not always thinking clearly and so quickly agreed to allow her

husband to administer the medication when necessary. Physically, M was putting on weight, mainly because she just did not have the energy to exercise as she used to, blood pressure was elevated and M said she always seemed to have a cold or a cold sore.

I spoke with M about how current neuroscience research had demonstrated the link between stress and toxic thinking¹ and she was willing to see if toxic thinking really was the root of her stress.

Toxic thinking can be physically, emotionally and spiritually dangerous. Toxic thoughts trigger negative and anxious emotions which produce biochemicals that cause the body stress. They are not only stored in your mind, but also in every cell in your body. Every thought, whether positive or negative, goes through the same cycle when it forms. Thoughts are basically electrical impulses, chemicals and neurons. As you think, your thoughts are activated, which in turn activates your attitude (all of your thoughts put together) and reflects your state of mind. Your attitude is reflected in the chemical secretions that are released. Positive attitudes cause the secretion of the correct amount of chemicals and negative attitudes distort the chemical secretions in a way that disrupts their flow. The chemicals are like little cellular

signals that translate the information of your thoughts into a physical reality in your body and mind, creating an emotion. The combination of thoughts, emotions and resulting attitudes impacts your body in a positive or negative way.²

Every thought has a corresponding emotion attached to it and this is stored not only in your brain but as a photocopy in your body's cells. All the unresolved thoughts and emotions, the negativity we hold on to, show up in our body and can make us sick.³

M hadn't realised she could think about her thinking, that she had a choice when information entered her brain, whether to accept it or not; that she could control what became a part of who she is. For M this was a 'light blub' moment and I could see hope begin to flow in her.

In the next and final article in this series, you will learn some of the strategies that helped M; strategies that may help you, too, if you are struggling with anxiety, depression or stress related issues. You do not have to be a victim. ■

¹ Leaf, C. 2009 *Who switched off my brain? Controlling toxic thoughts and emotions*, Inprov, Ltd, Southlake

² Colbert, D. 2003 *Deadly Emotions*, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville

³ Pert, C. 2003 *Molecules of Emotion*, Scribner, New York