



Stress Reduction and the Power of Thought

Our thoughts – or the way that we interpret events at work (past, present or future) – are integral to our stress levels. Most of our thoughts speed past and remain below our level of awareness (we are not conscious of them). With practice and time, however, you can train yourself to be more aware of your thoughts.

When you are having a stress-related thought at work, it can be helpful to ask yourself, “*Is this thought serving a useful function?*”

- **Ask yourself** *how accurate and valid your appraisal is of a stressful situation.*
 - o When you have had this thought in the past, how often were you right?
 - o Did what you worry or fear actually happen when you dealt with this stressor in the past?
 - o What would you say to a close friend in a similar situation?

- **Consider** *how important the implications are in the context of the things that matter most to you.*
 - o How high on your priority list of important things does the stressor fall?
 - o What implications does the stressor have related to the things that are most important to you (e.g., family, friends, health)?

- **Ask** *how much control you have over the situation.*
 - o Can you actually do anything about the stressor? If yes, what can you do? Make a plan! If not, then you need to learn to let it go!

The answers to the questions above can help you discern whether a specific stress response is adaptive and serves a function.

Even if it is adaptive, remember that simply staying in the stress state is not helpful:

you need to make a plan and take action to resolve the situation.

REMEMBER: the only person in control of your thoughts and whether you feel stressed is YOU!