

# From Stress Reaction to *Relaxation Response*



By Ann Marie Nielsen, Ph.D.

We are all well aware of the effects of stress. It depletes our happiness, drains our energy, scatters our focus and attention. On the other hand, we all have an understanding of the benefits of relaxation. We feel more open, trusting, joyful, lighthearted, safe and expansive.

We tend to live our lives with a level of stress that ranges from mild, chronic unease, to overwhelming distress. We are so accustomed to living with stress that our society just accepts a “stress management” way of life. Have you ever thought, there must be a better way? There is a better way! It is a way of engaging with life that shifts you from the stress response to the relaxation response - not just as an occasional act, but as a moment to moment way of life. Relaxation is not just intended to be an hour here or there when you relax and feel relief, only to go back into the same world of stress in the next hour. The relaxation response is a way of life - moving through your life and your day from a sense of trustful confidence, wellbeing, ease, and happiness.

A challenging situation, is not just what happens “to us”. In reality, challenges happen “for us”. This change in perception moves us toward the relaxation response because it engenders feelings of safety, an openness to opportunity, and a world-view of benevolence. Everything orchestrates together for your growth, your highest expression of your gifts, and relationships of authentic support. When we look for the gift, the benevolence, and the growth opportunity in every situation, we find the happiness that comes from maturity and wisdom.

When an event happens and we judge it as undesirable or “bad”, we constrict and tighten in our reaction. We inwardly resist what we perceive as a threat. The cells and functions of the body are affected, creating a sluggishness or even a blockage in the function of our physical system. However, when an event occurs, we have the choice to stop judging and move into an attitude of inner acceptance and gratitude. This moves us out of the stress response and into the relaxation response. In the relaxation response, there is a sense of gratitude for the opportunity to notice emotional reactions and correlating core beliefs. In this way, limiting beliefs and non-supportive emotional responses can be released. This creates a spaciousness for new life-affirming and vitality-enhancing beliefs and perceptions. This in turn results in choices, behaviors and actions that result in more constructive and productive outcomes.

In moving from stress reactions to relaxation responses there are many emotional modalities and techniques that can be applied, that result in deep relaxation experiences that carry over to a benevolent, empowered, successful approach to life on a day to day basis.

I would be happy to work with you and develop a unique plan tailored for your individual life situation, temperament, and physical-emotional patterns of response. Now is your time to shine, to live from ease and success, and from happiness and fulfillment.

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