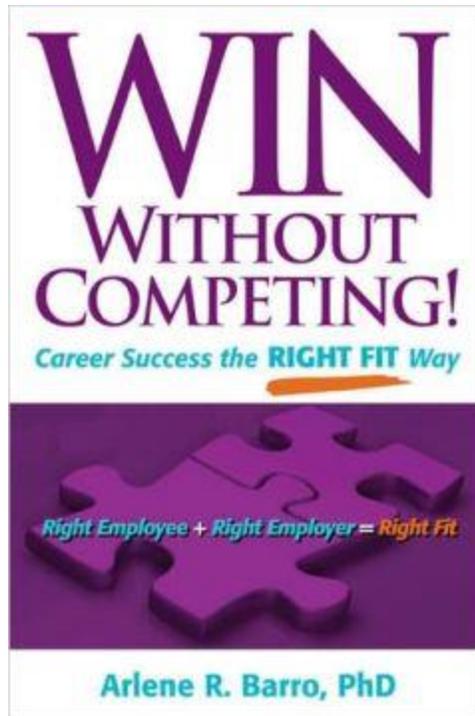


Conquering Stress! With Dr. Arlene—Erroneous Assumptions Cause Stress



Posted: Friday, April 15, 2016 – 4:39 PM

Dr. Arlene Barro

From birth to death we are vulnerable to stress symptoms. It is imperative, from childhood onward, to recognize the early signs of stress to reduce the risk of health problems such as high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity and diabetes. It is not uncommon to have more than one health challenge concurrently.

Stress causes imbalances which can promote a chain reaction. If you have stress in one part of your body, it can spread to other areas. You do not want your body to assume the posture of stress, both internally and externally. It is critical to stop the spread of stress. We do not want stress to manage us. We must manage stress. If we do not, we will start to experience the effects of stress on our body, mood and behavior.

Are you currently experiencing headaches, sleep problems, anxiety, irritability, overeating or under-eating?

If you have one or more of these stress symptoms or other behaviors, are you recognizing, ignoring, or denying that they exist? Some of my clients cringe from fear when I say “stress.” For example, one client, a man in his 40s and a cancer survivor, weighs 300 pounds. When we were discussing his weight, I gently

mentioned the “S” word and my stress seminar, he then said that he has no stress. He explained that he was overweight only because he loved to eat, and his wife recently introduced him to a great Italian restaurant that he adored.

I remembered that he had mentioned stress in earlier conversations. That is one reason why I asked him about it. Think about this. If he really refuses to acknowledge a connection between stress and obesity, did he also refuse to acknowledge the early signs of cancer? After more sessions, he finally made the decision to conquer stress and lose weight. Fear and denial of stress could shorten a happy, healthy life.

Are you sticking in the mud?

George Bernard Shaw said, “We must not stay as we are, doing always what was done last time, as we shall stick in the mud.” Think of rigidity as the hallmark of sticking in the mud.

Changing your behavior easily and naturally is essential to conquering stress. Make small changes first. Start with your daily routines. If you eat the same breakfast day after day, try a different breakfast a couple times a week. If you always take the same route from home to work, or your favorite food store, try a new route. Orchestrate different scenarios in which you make small changes. After you master making the small changes, you are ready to attempt the big changes. Get ready for your first challenge: Eliminating Erroneous Assumptions.

What erroneous assumptions are you making?

All day long we talk to ourselves. Are we giving ourselves the right advice? Frequently, not. We make erroneous assumptions: we assume things that are not true about situations and other people. What happens if we act on erroneous assumptions? Many years ago a physician reported a case study in a medical journal in which he told a patient to eat more starch. The physician made the perilous, erroneous assumption that the patient understood he was talking about food. What did the patient eat? Laundry starch, another perilous, erroneous assumption! I loved the case study because it supported my view that physicians needed to improve their communication skills. Fortunately, the patient who ate the laundry starch did not die. If you are making erroneous assumptions and acting on them, you will increase your stress. It is amazing the tales we create and tell believing that our assumptions are correct.

What erroneous assumption caused you significant stress?

Explain who made the assumption, who acted on the assumption, and the stress results. Email your response to drbarro@barroglobal.com. Your erroneous assumptions tale may appear in my next article. The goal is to motivate readers to eliminate erroneous assumptions, which will reduce their stress.

Dr. Arlene Barro is a UCLA-Trained behavioral educational psychologist who holds a master's and a Ph.D. with distinction for her doctoral dissertation on creativity. She is the author of WIN Without Competing!, talk show host, motivational speaker, consultant and CEO. Dr. Arlene's company, barro global search, inc., is located on Wilshire Boulevard.