



Patterns for Handling Stress

Over the past week my otherwise healthy son experienced blurring of vision both while athletics training and in school. The ensuing visits to doctors and hospitals as we tried to identify the cause highlighted to me that I have very specific patterns in how I deal with both the unexpected and also emotional worry. (At this point we believe that he had a mild variant of migraine without the pain – he is doing just fine).

My focus here is to draw attention to how, following situations of stress there is considerable benefit to be gained in looking at your actions and patterns of behaviour and taking time to consider their effectiveness so that you can be better prepared and respond more effectively when a similar stressful situation arises again. Going back to my own situation, like many parents I drop everything when there is a problem with one of my children – but actually I don't.

The reality last week was as follows: I was just finishing up with a networking colleague when I got the call from my son's school. Despite the fact that this colleague offered to make a number of calls for me to excuse me from subsequent meetings I said no – I could do it all myself. The reality was that I made my situation more stressful by not accepting the helpful hand that was offered. I then proceeded to organise my daughters after school arrangements, collect my son, met up with a colleague on the way to the hospital to arrange transfer of documents and then finally rang my husband when I had all arrangements in place. If one of my clients had done this I would actively encourage them to see for themselves the lack of logic.

And yet in times of stress I go into hyper organised mode. Was I really paying full attention to either my son or my driving –No!

If one of my children gets sick again next week would it be the same pattern? If I had not taken this time to look at the pattern then the answer would probably be yes. Now that I have considered the situation calmly I have come to realise that there are specific elements that I can change. Firstly I need to be open to accepting the help of those who are nearby when an unexpected stress arises.

Secondly, and this is particularly in relation to my children I need to call on the support of their Dad much quicker and focus only on the child in immediate need of attention. Their dad is perfectly capable of sorting out the housekeeping arrangements.

And so my challenge to you is to take time to consider a stressful situation in your life. In the calmness of the present consider if the patterns of activity that you engaged in actually worked effectively for you. Did you take on more of the burden than you needed to? Did you allow others who would have liked to help and support you get involved? Did you actually focus on what or whom you really needed to focus on? Were you jumping from one thing to another and not actually getting the desired results? If you could have handled the situation more effectively what changes would you make? You can make the decisions now and have a better plan in your head should the situation arise again in the future.

You can change the pattern.

Warm Wishes

Mary