

The American Psychological Association conducted a survey in October which indicated that 80% of respondents were finding our nation's economic crisis to be a significant source of stress.

The percentage would probably be even higher if the same survey were to be conducted again this month.

The good news: there is very little in life that is all bad.

Have you noticed how much nicer people seem to be right now?

I've observed some wonderful changes:

- Merchants appear to appreciate my business more;
- Busy professionals seem to have more time and patience;
- Most prices are much lower;
- An attorney told me that people are not suing each other as often now because lawsuits are so expensive;
- A woman who moved in with a friend has found it to be much quieter living there as well as more enjoyable;
- A marriage counselor wrote that many couples are working harder to repair their relationships, rather than rush into divorce proceedings;

Overpriced goods and services are receiving more competition and greedy individuals are being rooted out of our financial systems.

Change can be a very good thing.

Most change evolves slowly; we usually have time to prepare for it.

Our nation's financial crisis reminds me of the television commercial that proclaims "Life comes at you fast!"

We need to be careful that we choose to act and not simply react.

The Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle is a book that has helped me.

Tolle wrote that it's important to focus on what we are doing in the present moment because whatever power we have is always exercised in the "now."

Any goals that we set will be accomplished in the "now" of the future.

Doing each thing well and carefully in the present moment, he explains, no matter how disagreeable the task, is the route to creating a better future.

Health alert: the two primary symptoms of long term stress, attention and concentration deficits, make it hard to focus.

In order to override them, we need to take very good care of ourselves:

- Daily exercise reduces anxiety and depression and helps us to be more centered and focused. Walking and running are practically cost-free.
- Prolonged stress can be exhausting; we need more rest than usual.
- Thoughtful nutrition is critical and can be inexpensive; overdoing alcohol, caffeine and sugar-laden snacks will rebound against us.
- Meditation refreshes our minds and gives our spirits a rest. Yoga and tai chi are movement meditations that most people can perform.
- Reading a novel or doing repetitive tasks like knitting also work well.
- Self-grooming activities are really relaxing; think of a warm bath.

Learning to let go with grace is an impressive emotional achievement.

Tolle reminds readers of the adage "What you resist persists." To me, that translates to no whining, no "poor me" ruminations and no resentments.

I plan to approach the future without regret or recriminations by choosing upbeat thoughts and positive actions, one day at a time, one task at a time.

There is always opportunity in adversity; I want to be well prepared for it.