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## Author shows how to stick to your New Year's resolutions by managing your stress

By **ISEIBERLING** MON, JAN 10 2011

Gina Mollicone-Long, author of *Think or Sink: The One Choice That Changes Everything*, shows us how to manage our stress — your healthiest resolution for 2011!

"There's no such thing as stress!" she says.

But Mollicone-Long isn't saying that the effects of stress aren't real. They are very real, she says. In fact, stress gets the blame for most of our health problems today. Stress is a big problem for many people. However, the solution is easier than you think, she insists.

Change the way you think and you will immediately change your stress level, Mollicone-Long says, adding that you are actually in control of what you classify as stressful and what you do not. Realizing this fact and putting it into action puts you back in control of experiences. You are no longer at the mercy of external circumstances. You can deliberately choose how you respond to any situation and therefore you can always be in control of the level of stress in your life, she explains.

In *Think or Sink*, she includes an entire chapter entitled "42 Things that will positively change your outlook".

Here are a few of Mollicone-Long's tips for breaking the stress cycle:

**1. Look up and smile.** Neurologically, we usually access our negative emotions by looking down so looking up can have the reverse effect by pulling us out of these negative emotions. Numerous studies have shown that smiling makes us feel good because it releases endorphins and serotonin – two powerful biochemicals that help us feel good.

**2. Belly breathe for one minute.** We tend to be a shallow chest-breathing culture but slow, deep, diaphragmatic (“belly”) breathing has been shown to decrease anxiety and tension. Breathing this way for one-minute halts a stress response. Doing it for 10 minutes reverses the response.

**3. Reframe.** Think of an entirely different meaning for your situation. Make it up. There are thousands of interpretations for your situation. If you change the meaning then you’ll immediately alter your response.

**4. Focus on what you want.** There is a part of our brain called the Reticular Activating System (RAS). Our RAS is in charge of finding what we are looking for. When things go wrong, we tend to focus on what’s going wrong. Due to the function of our RAS, this only leads to finding more of what’s wrong. If you look for what’s right then your RAS will automatically find it and then you’ll start feeling better.

**5. Take action.** Don't just wallow in your problem. Do something positive that will help you feel better. This could include getting a breath of fresh air, listening to uplifting music or getting some exercise.

Stress is a decision to classify something as stressful. Stress is a reaction. In many cases, stress is an overreaction to the circumstances, she explains.

The stress cycle begins at the moment you decide to classify a person or a circumstance as stressful. Furthermore, once you are in stress mode then other situations will seem more stressful leading to a snowballing stress effect. The only solution is to break the stress cycle.

In the end, it all comes down to a choice. The choice you have is to choose your response to any situation. When you alter your response to a situation, then you alter its effect on your life. Either you make the powerful choice for yourself or another choice gets made for you, based on habit or the input of the people and circumstances around you, says Mollicone-Long.

Reading *Think or Sink* (Sterling & Ross Publishers) will help you overcome stress, insists the book's author. Hey, she wrote the book — of course she's going to pitch it!

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