

## Mother Knew Best

I remember my Mom telling me to count to 10 before saying something in anger. It turns out that she was right, although, she needed to add, “exhale for 5 counts and inhale for 5...for several cycles!”

The simple act of breathing goes a long way to balancing the Autonomic Nervous System. The 2 branches of the Autonomic nervous system regulates over 90% of your body's internal functions. This includes the hormonal & immune systems, digestion, metabolism and sleep.

The Sympathetic Nervous System accelerates the heart rate, constricts blood vessels, and raises blood pressure. Think “gas” for your “car.” The Parasympathetic Nervous System is like the “brake” of your “car.” It slows the heart rate, increases intestinal and gland activity, and relaxes sphincter muscles.

You may be wondering what this has to do with anger. When we are over-taxed, which is synonymous with being chronically stressed, our nervous system is not in a state of balance. This wears us out and also wears us down. We say and do things, which we normally would not say or do if we felt less pressure and were actually thinking before speaking.

Our language reflects what happens in anger; the dam broke, pressure cooker, blew his top. All of these paint a picture of what is going on internally.

The smallest things can cause us to fly off the handle (another one); afterwards, when we've calmed down, we may wonder why we get angry so quickly. When we are engaged in negative emotions such as anger, fear or frustration, the body goes through more than 1,400 known chemical reactions. It is important to note that one episode of anger results in side-effects that last long after you've “blown up.” Cortisol, 'the stress hormone,’ can stay in your body for up to 13 hours and its effects are cumulative. Cortisol has been linked to a number of illnesses, including Heart Disease, Stroke, Osteoporosis, Alzheimer's, Diabetes and immune and fertility issues.

Constant stress inhibits our ability to reason and to think clearly. It is our body's ancient defense system kicking in. During pre-historic times, this system kept us alive – allowing us to run from the Woolly Mammoth or to go and hunt down dinner.

Without having strategies and applying heart-felt emotions to the circumstances in which we find ourselves, it is the equivalent of putting out a candle with a fire hose. In other words, we revert back to historic times and **react**, when it would be best to **act**.

Imagine a radio that is not tuned to the station – there's a lot of static. An unbalanced nervous system creates internal “static” which can and does wreck havoc, both internally and externally. Professional and personal performance is impacted and relationships are damaged.

Is it really worth your health to curse at the traffic on your way to work? Remember, **13 hours** of side-effects from just **one** episode of anger. This is also cumulative...in other words, you are stockpiling it.

Learning techniques when you are calm will go a long way to helping you balance your nervous system so that you respond appropriately – fostering communication, rather than restricting it.

Next time you are ready to blow up, pause, breathe deeply from your diaphragm, not your chest and think about how you can respond differently to this situation, by applying technique that get to the heart

of it all.

“Anger is never without a reason, but seldom a good one.” - Benjamin Franklin.