

### **The assumptions underlying some negative emotions**

*Descriptions of are emotions drawn from "Why We Should Think of Stress as a Subset of Emotion", Richard S Lazarus, in the Handbook of Stress (Ed Leo Golderberger and Shlomo Breznitz), 1993, The Free Press, New York*

Emotion	Description	Underlying Assumption
Anger	A demeaning offense against me and mine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Frustration of important goals (stated or not stated)</li><li>• Damage to our self-esteem, or to people, objects or ideas we value</li><li>• Blamed on another person or group of people</li></ul>
Anxiety	Facing certain existential threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Threat to our survival or what we hold to be important</li><li>• Uncertainty about whether the threatened situation will occur or its severity</li><li>• No internal or external blame</li></ul>
Fright	Facing an immediate, concrete and overwhelming danger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Threat to our survival or what we hold to be important</li><li>• No internal or external blame</li></ul>
Guilt	Having transgressed a moral imperative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Failure to live up to an important moral standard</li><li>• Blamed on ourselves</li></ul>
Shame	Failure to live up to an ego ideal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Failure to live up to an ideal of oneself</li><li>• Blamed on ourselves</li></ul>
Sadness	Having experienced an irrevocable loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Damage to ourselves, our self-esteem, or to people, objects or ideas we value</li><li>• No intense internal or external blame</li><li>• No ability to recover the situation</li></ul>

## Step by Step Approach to Analyzing Negative Emotions that Cause Stress

1. Relax
2. Identify the assumptions that you are making
3. Challenge the assumptions
4. Take appropriate action

Note: negative emotions can be a useful early warning signal that something may be wrong. We can take instant action if it is required but it is usually helpful to analyze the assumptions behind the emotions in order to determine if it is a warning signal for something that we need to pay more attention to.

Assumptions we may be making:

- **That the situation is relevant to our goals:** Goals can be formal goals or objectives that we set ourselves, or can be informal, unstated desires like wanting to drink when thirsty or eat when hungry. If the situation is not relevant to our goals or to the goals of people who are important to us, then we feel little emotion. The intensity of the emotion we feel reflects the importance of the goal.
- **That the situation threatens our goals:** We usually experience positive emotions in situations that support our achievement of goals and negative emotion when these are being frustrated.
- **That we expect the situation to turn out badly.**
- **That we feel that something important to us is being threatened:** We experience different emotions depending on which of the following personal factors we think are threatened
  - Our self-esteem, or the value that other people see in us
  - Our ideal of how we want to see ourselves
  - Our moral values
  - Thoughts, ideas, philosophies and understandings of reality that we think are important
  - People that we love or objects that we value
  - Goals and ambitions that are important to us

# Stress Management: Your Legitimate Rights

## Your Legitimate Rights

Reprinted with permission from the *Stress & Relaxation Workbook* by Martha Davis PhD et al, New Harbinger Publications, Oakland, CA

Mistaken Assumption: Traditional	Your Legitimate Rights
It is selfish to put your needs before others' needs.	You have a right to put yourself first sometimes
It is shameful to make mistakes. You should have an appropriate response for every occasion	You have a right to make some mistakes. Mistakes are inevitable, particularly when you are stretching yourself to do something new or original
If you can't convince others that your feelings are reasonable, then the feelings must be wrong, or maybe you are going crazy	You have a right to be the final judge of your feelings and accept them as legitimate.
You should respect the views of others, especially if they are in a position of authority. Keep your differences of opinion to yourself. Listen and learn.	You have a right to have your own opinions and convictions.
You should always try to be logical and consistent.	You have a right to change your mind and decide on a different site of action
You should be flexible and adjust. Others have good reasons for their actions and it is not polite to question them.	You have a right to protest against unfair treatment or criticism.
You should never interrupt people. Asking questions reveals your stupidity to others.	You have a right to interrupt in order to ask for clarification
Things could get even worse. Don't rock the boat.	You have a right to negotiate for change.
You shouldn't take up other people's valuable time with your problems	You have a right to ask for help or for emotional support.
People don't want to hear that you feel bad, so keep it to yourself	You have a right to feel and express pain.
When someone takes the time to give you advice, you should take it very seriously. They are often right	You have a right to ignore the advice of others.
Knowing that you did something well is its own reward. People don't like show-offs. Successful people are secretly disliked and envied. Be modest when	You have a right to receive formal recognition for your work and your achievements



complimented.	
You should always try to accommodate others. If you don't, they won't be there when you need them	You have a right to say "No".
Don't be anti-social. People are going to think you don't like them if you say you'd rather be alone instead of with them.	You have a right to be alone, even if others would prefer your company
You should always have a good reason for everything you feel and do.	You have a right not to justify yourself to others
When someone is in trouble, you should help them	You have a right not to take responsibility for someone else's problem.
You need to be sensitive to the needs and wishes of others, even when they are unable to tell you what they want.	You have a right not to have to anticipate others' needs and wishes.
It is always good policy to stay on people's good side.	You have a right not to always worry about the goodwill of others.
It is not nice to put people off. If questioned, give an answer.	You have a right to choose not to respond to a situation

## **Stress Management: Rational Affirmations**

### **Using rational thinking to develop specific stress-reducing affirmations**

Some types of stress producing thoughts may include:

1. Feelings of inadequacy:
  - Am I well trained and experienced enough to do this job
  - Have I prepared enough
  - Have I done sufficient planning
2. Worries about performance
  - Do I have the resources necessary to do this job
  - Have I scheduled enough time
  - Do I have the support team or systems cued and ready to go
3. Problems with issues outside of your control
  - Is there appropriate contingency planning
  - Have I thought through and planned for all the potential risks
4. Worry about other people's reactions
  - What will they think of me
  - Will they think I didn't do a good job

Some types of positive affirmations in response to the above stressful concerns:

1. Feelings of inadequacy
  - I am well trained for this
  - I have the experience, tools and resources that I need
  - I can do a superb job
2. Worries about performance
  - I thoroughly understand the problem and have the resources I need
  - I am prepared to do an excellent job
3. Problems with issues outside your control
  - I have thought through everything and am prepared to handle anything that might reasonably happen
  - We are very well placed to react with flexibility to whatever might happen
4. Worry about other people's reactions
  - I am well-prepared and am doing the best that I can
  - Fair people will respect this
  - I will rise above any unfair criticism in a mature and professional way