

Week 5 - Stress: Responding vs. Reacting  
**STOP: The One-minute Breathing Space**



***This week's videos***

**How To Make Stress Your Friend**, comes from Kelly McGonigal, a psychologist specializing in health medicine, who puts stress in perspective, re-framing stress, not as an enemy to health and well-being, but as a response which is protective and even life-giving. She perhaps goes a little too far in saying that health endangering stress simply comes from a "belief that stress is bad", but her video provides a good counter-balance to the idea that stress is always bad.

Between stimulus and response there is a space.

In the last video, Susan Bauer-Wu describes how mindfulness can counteract a disproportionate stress reaction and introduces you to **STOP**, a mindfulness practice you can use literally anywhere anytime to ground you and help you to be more resilient and effective in the face of difficult situations.

In that space is our power to choose our response.

***Reading***

Harvard Health's **Understanding the Stress Response** describe the physiological and neurological effects of stress, distinguishing between acute stress, which is short-term and adaptive, and chronic stress, which is the primary cause of stress-related health problems.

In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

**Anatomy of Fear** is a graphic depiction of the stress response. **PCP STOP and De Stress** is a description of the process you will be using for this week's informal practice.

- Victor Frankl

***Daily Practices***

For the **formal practice**, we introduce "Yoga 2" and continue with the Sitting Meditation, alternating between them. If there are any of the yogas you haven't yet tried, this could be the time to try one or more of them.

For the **informal practice**, you will look for opportunities to practice **STOP** during the course of the day. Don't expect to remember the precise steps of "STOP" during the most trying parts of the day - it's enough just to remember to stop and take a breath.

The best way to make it second nature is to practice it when you aren't stressed, such as during the "in between" times, like waiting in line, walking from one room to another, getting in/out of your car, etc.

*Below are your materials for this week:*

***Videos***

**How To Make Stress Your Friend** by Kelly McGonigal [14 min]

**STOP: A Short Mindfulness Practice** by Susan Bauer-Wu [4 min]

***Reading***

**The Anatomy of Fear** Discovery Magazine graphic

**Understanding the Stress Response** article from Harvard Health Publications

**PCP STOP and De Stress** Presence Care Project

***Practice sheets***

**Formal Practice [PDF] [or WORD format]** - Mindful Yoga (Yoga 2) and Sitting

**Informal Practice [PDF] [or WORD format]** - STOP: The One Minute Breathing Space