

Learning to Stress Well.¹

Are we having fun yet?

By Mary Elaine Kiener

There I was--in one of my favorite places on earth, on a perfect summer afternoon--gently navigating a shallow, clear-as-glass river in a canoe, with a group of folks whose company I enjoy. My rowing companion (a joint business colleague and friend) turned to me in the midst of an impromptu coaching session to ask: "Mary, what do you do for FUN?"

Somehow, that afternoon suddenly seemed a little less "perfect". I hemmed-and-hawed, stammering my way to a mutually unsatisfactory response. I knew she wanted me to articulate a set of activities I did for "fun", in contrast to "work". However, I've never been an "either/or" type of person. Instead, my preferences lean toward a blended, inclusive existence that includes far more "yes, and's" than "or's" or "but's".

When I first encountered the unusually spacious 12-dimensional model of wellbeing that serves as the foundation of "learning to stress well", I was intrigued that two seemingly opposite concepts of "playing AND working" would comprise a SINGLE dimension. After all, standard definitions of "play" include such distinctions as "for enjoyment and recreation rather than a serious or practical purpose", while "work" (as a noun) is defined as "involving mental or physical effort""to achieve a purpose, result"....and usually "as a means of earning income".

All too often, we fall into the mistaken belief that work will always include drudgery, while play will always be enjoyable. [Yet, I can also think of countless situations when we tend to turn "play-ful" pastimes into "work-like" obligations!]

I've come to believe that "creativity" lies at the heart of this particular dimension. This might mean inviting a playful way of "being" to whatever I happen to be "doing" --perhaps by discovering how to turn an "I-have-to-do-this" attitude into an "I-get-to-do-this" one. Or, developing a mindset of creating a treasure, like a cultivated pearl--in spite of whatever struggles might arise in the process. And, by always choosing a path that can both nourish and replenish--myself and those around me.

I'll be back soon at that river for a few days with my business colleagues. We'll carry plastic deck chairs to sit in the cool, thigh-high water, sipping cherry martinis. We'll venture out for a group canoe/kayak/inner-tube meandering down the river. There'll be lots of laughter and stories to share--among those already familiar with the cabin experience as well as those there for their first time. I expect we'll also talk some business while we're all together.

Which brings me to our topic for the next time we meet: communicating. See you then! And in the meantime? I'd love to hear how you'd respond to "What do YOU do for fun?"

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¹ Kiener, M.E. (2015, August). Learning to stress well. Are we having fun yet? *Sibyl Magazine. For the Spirit and Soul of Woman*. Retrieved from www.sibylmagazine.com.