

## **Learning to Stress Well.<sup>1</sup>**

Communicating – Inside me, with you

By Mary Elaine Kiener

The long-awaited weekend was just beginning; its festive mood presaged an atmosphere of celebratory love. Amidst hugs, wine, dinner and convivial conversations, a family member turned to quietly inform me, "We need to have a serious talk." She ominously repeated "serious", then added, "But not until after the wedding." It would take another 24 hours before I learned the story behind the intrigue.

"We need to talk." Oh, how these four simple words once wrought havoc inside my entire being. My typical reaction? An immediate inner response of "Oh no, I've done something wrong!" followed by a lingering, growing tension throughout my body-mind-spirit until the allotted talk-time would arrive. Like an over-tightly-coiled jack-in-the-box, I would defensively prime for self-protection against whatever I might possibly hear. At some point during the eventual "talk", tears would erupt (from me!) followed by a deep exhaustion from laying down the heavy weight of a too-long-held burden.

This time, it felt differently inside. Sure, there was a little bit of a childishly impatient "Why do I have to wait" inner whine--which, once acknowledged, solemnly agreed to sit fairly quietly without interrupting. And then, a somewhat detached, studiously curious part of me stepped forward to logically consider possibilities that might warrant such serious communication. Eventually, I realized the most likely issue for discussion was health-related (or, rather, health/life threatening), with some type of financial issue being a distant second option. Much to my surprise, it wasn't until well into the next day that I had even the slightest inkling of "I wonder IF I MIGHT have done or said something wrong?" And, when that thought did arrive, I easily acknowledged and dismissed it as not even a viable option, for I was confident in the stability of our long-term relationship.

What could account for this marked difference in my response to her request for us to have that serious talk? For one, perhaps I have finally experienced and endured enough stressful experiences in my life to know that I could handle whatever she might present (even though it might also be heart-wrenching). Plus, a benefit of my learning to "stress well" has been a growing ability to pause, to gently listen from an inside place of compassionate presence throughout the entire process of communicating with another person.

Yet, perhaps there is something even deeper here. Walking through a forest preserve the next morning, I imagined how successful communication--an effective exchange of words--is like the exchange of air between trees and humans. More than a mere in-and-out flow, this life-sustaining intimate exchange creates a transformative process inside each one. So too, there is an intimate, transformative exchange of words each time we communicate with one another.

Would you like to talk? Drop me a line and we can start from there.

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<sup>1</sup> Kiener, M.E. (2015, September). Learning to stress well. Communicating – Inside me, with you. *Sibyl Magazine. For the Spirit and Soul of Woman*. Retrieved from [www.sibylmagazine.com](http://www.sibylmagazine.com).