

# Stress Management Series

## Part 3: Cultivating Joy

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# The Path to Freedom

We have now defined “stress” and “stress management” in a way that provides meaning for the remainder of our series. We will conclude with novel approaches to the development of a stress reduction/self-realization program that honors both your individual viewpoint and your unique path of self-expression.

- Success in Life could be defined as the continued expansion of happiness and the progressive realization of worthy goals.
- Chopra



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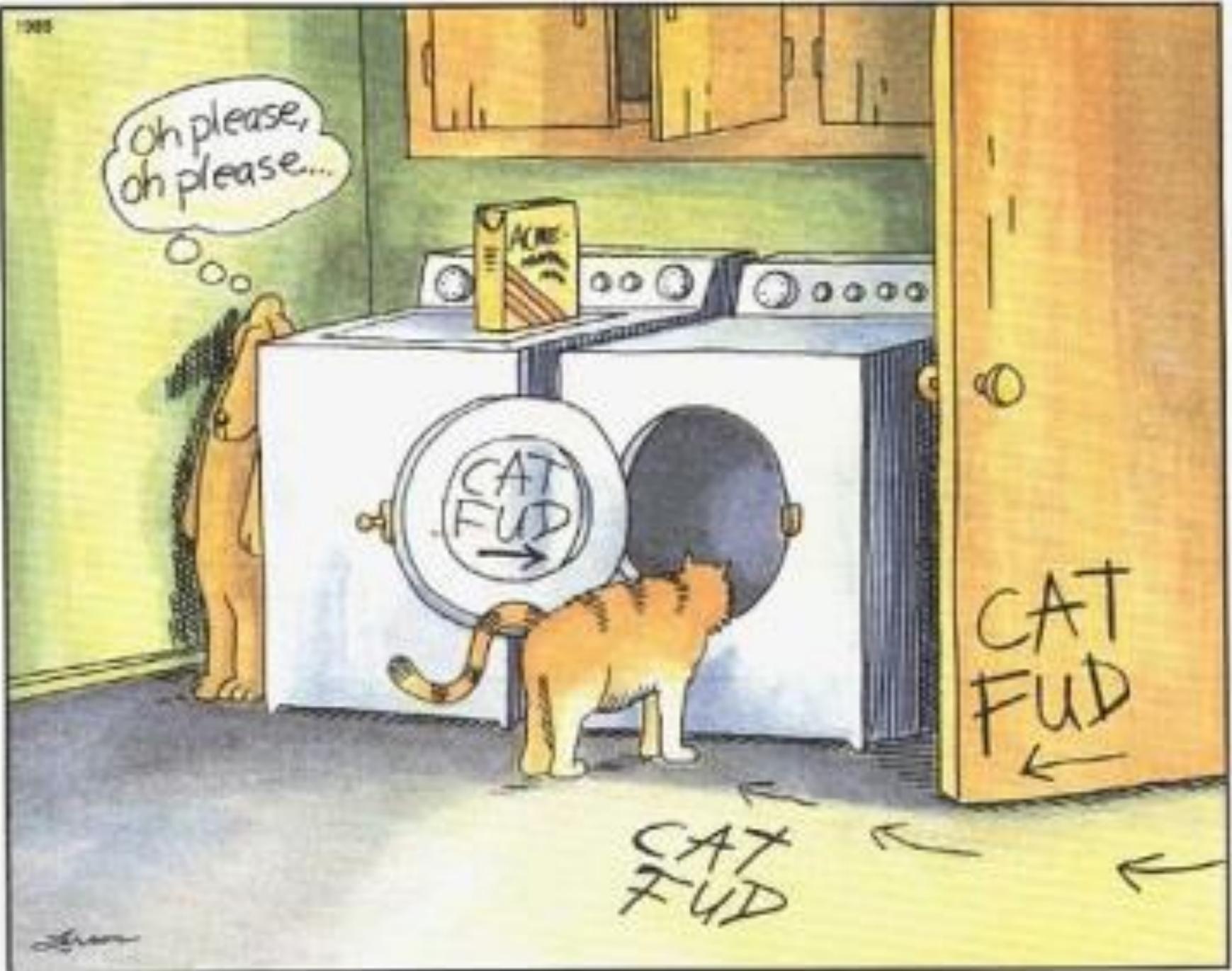
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*Simon*





For any one of us to evolve our personal level of awareness so that we can grow and develop those habits which promote our own well-being, we proceed through a necessary “chain of knowingness”.

**True Freedom** comes through the conscious cultivation of habits which break through the walls in our “**prison of past conditioning**”.

This chain of knowingness helps us understand why we do or do not evolve within our own lives. This chain is as follows:

# ***Belief*** precedes ***Understanding*** which leads to ***Knowingness***. (BUK)

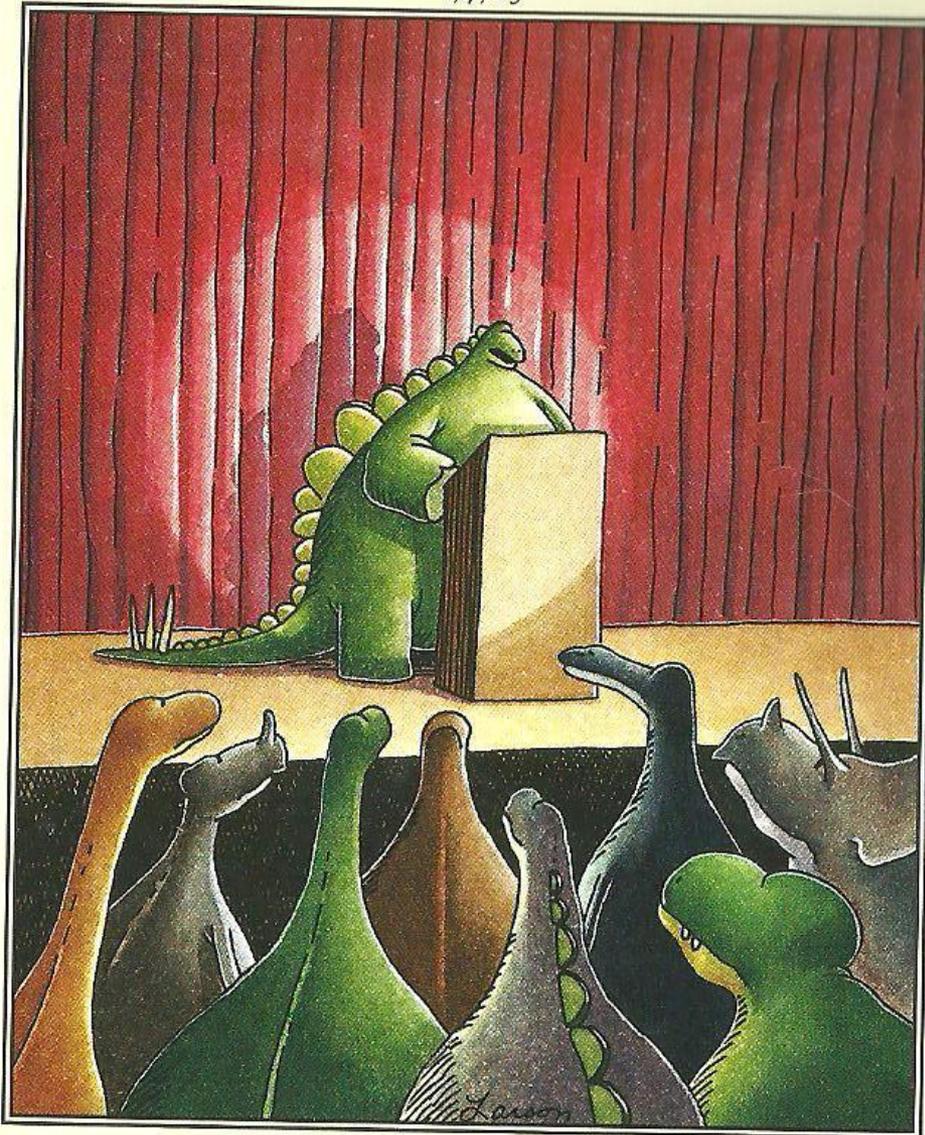
*Belief*, defined simply, means to have an opinion or conviction. Before we learn anything, belief sways us toward whatever truth we look for. People often ask me, “Do you believe in meditation?” I can take you through the years of my responses; however, until I accepted that meditation was (along with everything else in the sensate universe) indeed a belief system, I could never quite answer the question. What I mean by this is that if we don’t believe in something, we never try to understand it, and we certainly never incorporate this understanding into our knowingness. Is meditation actually a belief system? No. It just is. Yet we all believe much differently *in what we hold to be true about meditation.*

# Belief

- Our belief allows us to only acknowledge the data which upholds that which we already believed to be true, *blinding* us to any other understanding.
- Many of my patients refuse to even try meditation, because they have, for whatever reason, been enculturated to not believe.

# Belief

- Do you see how important belief is on the path to knowingness/unknowingness?
- Do you further see that it is those matters you (or your culture) hold the strongest convictions about in which you will be swayed so much more fervently whether towards believing or not believing, and therefore ultimately towards knowingness or “unknowingness”?
- When we discuss stress reduction and self-realization, it is these hurdles of disbelief that must be overcome for anyone to proceed towards understanding or knowingness.



“The picture’s pretty bleak, gentlemen. ... The world’s climates are changing, the mammals are taking over, and we all have a brain about the size of a walnut.”

***Belief*** precedes ***Understanding***  
which leads to ***Knowingness***.

(BUK)

*Understanding* is the mental process of comprehension and personal interpretation. In general, if one can remain open to the possibility to the truth of something (to believe), the next step a modern human being takes is an attempt to understand. In today's information era with Google and Wikipedia, never has there been more data available to help someone proceed with a decision pathway. When we further understand our cultural belief in the saying "***I think, therefore I am***", we have *deified the process of intellectual understanding,* often at the expense of *experiential knowingness*.

# Understanding

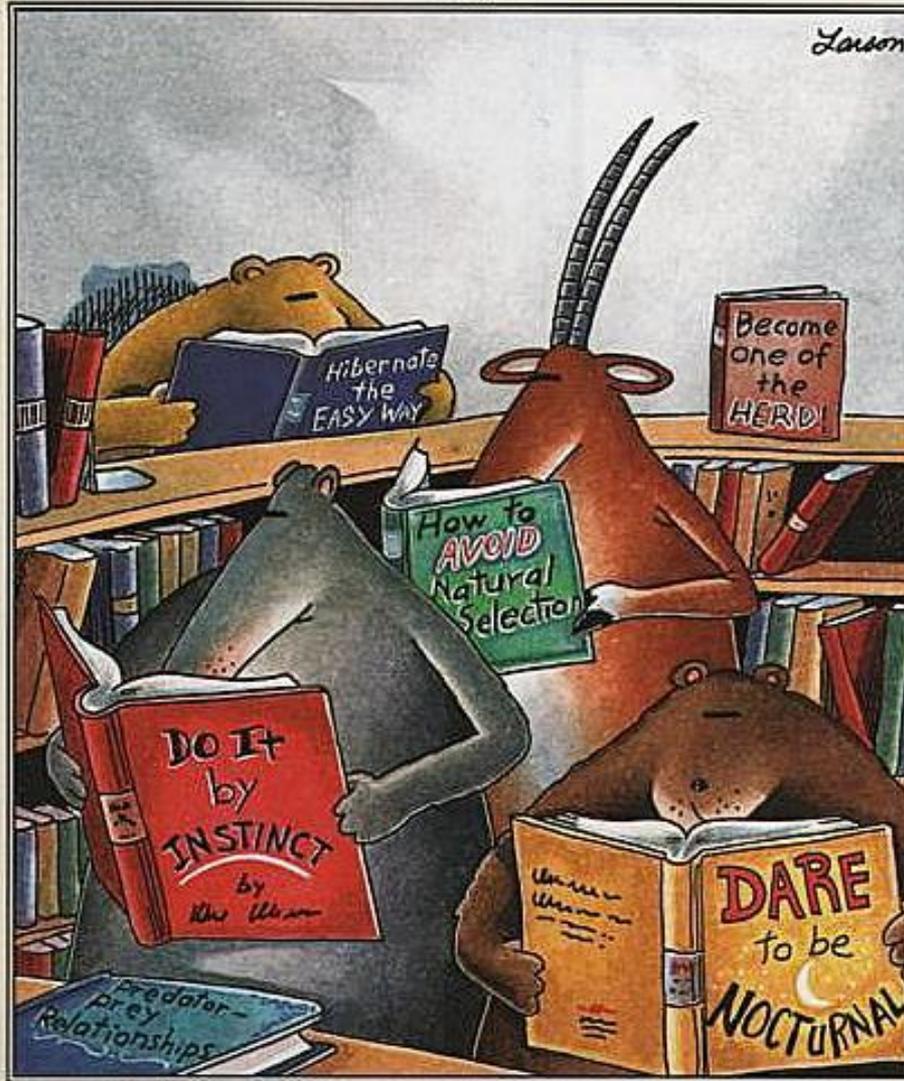
- For example, lately so many people read about the potential side effects of anything, not just medicines, and decide that what they read must be true.
- The danger of believing everything you read as truth is that you could become too fearful to live. If you read about the possible side-effects of every little thing you do in your day to day life, you would do nothing: no showers, no eating, no anything.
- Our intellect can, of course, help us when we get “the right information”. In most situations, the only way to proceed is by living the information.

# Understanding

- Reading about tennis has almost no benefit to the person.
- On the other hand, learning tennis, taking lessons to help our game, and playing tennis regularly can provide countless benefits with, usually, very few risks.
- However, understanding is paramount, as for most of us it is the step toward true knowingness.
- Yet for many, knowledge is the prison of past conditioning which we use to impede any hope for growth in awareness.

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Louison



In the animal self-help section

***Belief*** precedes ***Understanding***  
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(BUK)

***Experiential Knowingness*** is that state of awareness when you have found a personal “truth”. It involves the spirit, the mind, and the body. When someone has found a stress-reduction program that works for them, they know it to be true on all levels. One has listened to their beliefs, their intelligence, and most importantly their experience to show what practice is right for them.



This process towards **knowing** something is a mindfully practiced behavior. Look at the process of riding a bike. If you don't believe you can ride you may never get on! Just believing you can ride, however, does not make it so. Understanding how to ride a bike and receiving a helping hand can help us overcome the fear of not knowing. But you must get on and ride, and at some point you just **know** how to ride a bike.

# Experiential Knowingness

- This process (chain of knowingness) allows you to “transcend and include” each and every step in the totality of you.
- Once you truly know something, you have a more comprehensive grasp of its nature and your personal beliefs about it.
- With knowingness, compassion for all belief systems about any subject can be witnessed.

# Experiential Knowingness

- All belief systems can be compassionately **transcended and included** into your integral awareness.
- Furthermore, knowingness allows you to respect the myriad understandings of the subject without the need to make others wrong or yourself right!
- Finally, knowingness comes from your daily practice, which is done not because you were taught this way, but because that practice is simply part of you.



The four basic personality types

In conclusion you might be wondering why this topic is under the stress management series. The answer lies in the simple truth that nothing I can teach you will reach the level of experience until you practice meditation. Once you do, once you've transcended any beliefs, once you've read what you need to read, you must practice. Only then, through experiential knowingness, will any of this make any sense!



## References:

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- The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success, Deepak Chopra, 1994. [www.chopra.com](http://www.chopra.com)
- The Wisdom of the Enneagram, Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson, 1999. [www.enneagraminstitute.com](http://www.enneagraminstitute.com)