

Turning Anxiety Into Opportunity

Control, commitment and openness to change are the keys. You can't always choose your destiny in life, but you can choose how you cope with it.



Why do some people blossom in the face of stress while others wither? The determining factor may be whether you feel in control of your life. People who choose their paths, regardless of how stressful they are, don't suffer from stress as much as those who have no choice.

Take Control

How can you take control of your life? The first step is to get organized. Figure out what's important, then do it. Learn not to waste time on little things that don't matter. Many people put off organization because it takes time and energy at first, but the benefits of being in control of your time and energy outweigh the initial investment. Taking care of yourself also puts you in control. Be deliberate about what you eat: foods that are high in energy-producing complex carbohydrates and low in fat and sugar. Translation: Avoid junk food. Get energy from fresh fruits, vegetables, soups, natural snacks and sandwiches that are light on mayonnaise and other fatty dressings. Skip the cocktail or extra cup of coffee; caffeine and alcohol make stress worse. Set aside some time every day for your own mental and physical health. Exercise, relaxation activities and fun all enhance your sense of being in control of your life.

Make a Commitment

People who really believe their work is important can often put up with enormous amounts of stress. Whenever possible, choose work that's personally meaningful to you. Even if that's not possible, you can choose to do your best at the work you've been given.

Be Open to Change

All of us are subject to the curves life throws at us. There are two ways to react to change: by letting it buffet you about like a strong wind or by using

it to fill your sails and help you get where you want to go. Ironically, you increase your sense of control when you're open to change. Look at each change as an opportunity to gain new skills and knowledge. Not sure you like your new boss? Find out what makes her tick and what changes you can make so that you're more valuable to her.

Control, commitment and openness to change are the keys to turning anxiety into opportunity. You can't always choose your destiny in life, but you can choose how you cope with it. The more you're "in the driver's seat," the easier it will be to cope with stress.