

# When Life Throws You Curveballs...

## 5 Mistakes

That Could Be Dangerous To Your Health

## 5 Keys

For Surviving and Thriving Through Stressful Times



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## Introduction

Hi, I'm Betty Moore-Hafter, here to share with you some valuable information about what to do when a stressful time hits in your life. Modern life is already stressful. Then the unexpected happens: an illness, an accident, a loss. A relationship ending, a job changing, getting hit with a financial blow. A loved one with a new problem. *Life throws us curveballs*. There is no way to avoid times of great stress, some of them off the scale, some of them prolonged for months or years.

And what about the toll stress can take on our physical health? Some experts maintain that stress is America's #1 health problem. We all need to take stress seriously, understand what it may be doing to us, and learn how to protect ourselves from its harmful effects.

What I share here is based on new research involving stress and the body-mind connection. Some of what I have recently learned really surprised me. This new information gave me some exciting ideas for using the body-mind tool of EFT as a powerful antidote to the harmful effects of stress, and I'll let you in on what I've found.

In this little e-book, I want to make you aware of 5 mistakes that we often make when under stress and 5 keys to staying healthy and doing our best in spite of stresses and pressures. There is a lot of information on the topic of stress and health, but what I have learned recently is news to me and some of it may surprise you as well.

You will find complete information about the research and all documentation and references in my *Surprising Stress Research* report. You have free access to that report, plus I'm providing you with my complete Transforming Stress Toolkit. Find all the downloads here: <http://www.creativeeft.com/transforming-stress-toolkit/>

But for now, let me show you 5 mistakes I used to make (and sometimes still do!) and 5 keys that I believe can help us stay healthy and successfully navigate our way through stressful times.

EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) refers to the tapping method that is a central feature of my practice. If you are not familiar with EFT, I have videos and instructions on my how-to page:

[www.creativeeft.com/how-to-do-eft/](http://www.creativeeft.com/how-to-do-eft/) Tapping is easy to learn and a great tool to have for daily use and especially to deal with stress.

## Mistakes We Make When Stress Hits

Before I list these mistakes, which can cause stress to escalate and can increase its harmful physical effects, let me show you what it looks like. Here is a scenario of me without the information and tools I have now.

*I have just received some really bad news. "Oh no, how can this be happening?" I feel my heart pounding, my breath short. I feel like I'm about to jump out of my skin with anxiety. There's a terrible sense of urgency -- I've got to do something! At the same time, I feel horribly helpless -- there's really nothing I can do. Panic is setting in.*

*Then my mind starts racing. What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?? So many worrisome thoughts. The anxiety is escalating and fear is taking over. All kinds of worst-case scenarios and doomsday thoughts fill my mind. "This could be really bad. Oh my god, I should have made a better decision. I should have done something differently. Just goes to show, bad things always happen to me. I never have any luck."*

*I'm so stressed out that I feel a little sick to my stomach and my head is pounding. I start thinking that I'll probably get sick too. "Doesn't stress ruin your the immune system? I bet I'll get the flu now. And this is probably sending my blood pressure sky-high."*

*I had plans with friends but now I'll cancel them. I don't want them to see me in this state. I'm a mess. And I don't want to bring everybody down. All I want to do is isolate, withdraw, hole up and be all alone in my misery...*

There is something eerie about writing that scenario. I have been working with body-mind methods for over 15 years and yet it is *still* surprisingly easy to imagine that scene! This seems to be our default, the way that we are hard-wired. When stressful situations hit, the panic and anxiety that arise are powerful forces within us. Without tools and strategies, we can easily feel overwhelmed and be helpless to stop the escalating anxiety and stress. And, like a hurt animal, we may want to isolate and hide away to lick our wounds.

## 5 Mistakes That Can Endanger Your Health

Here are 5 mistakes that are easy to make. You will notice that they are all illustrated in the scenario above.

**Mistake #1** - Giving in to your NERVOUS SYSTEM. You are unaware that what is really happening inside you is your nervous system's fight-or-flight reaction. You don't realize that you could actually calm this and keep it from escalating. Instead, it seems that all this intensity coursing through you is "just how it is."

**Mistake #2** - Giving in to your MIND. The automatic nature of the mind is to react with fearful thoughts and negative beliefs. You are unaware of the real physical impact that these are having and, instead of knowing how to redirect the mind, you give the negative thinking free rein. But the more you give in to worry, the worse the physical stress and emotional anxiety become.

**Mistake #3** - Giving in to the BODY'S STRESS and SENDING THE WRONG MESSAGES. Stress and anxiety have powerful physical effects that almost make you feel ill. Being stressed-out feels physically bad but you don't know that there is anything that you can do about that. Moreover, you unwittingly give your body all the wrong messages which could actually increase the harm the stress is doing to you.

**Mistake #4** - Feeling VICTIMIZED AND DISEMPOWERED, which is a high stress state. You are unaware that you could actually have a huge amount of power to *transform stress into strength*.

**Mistake #5 - ISOLATING** - It seems easier to withdraw and isolate yourself. But you are losing out on one of the chief physical and emotional antidotes to stress' harmful effects --human connection.

### Are These Really That Bad?

It may not be clear yet just why I consider these to be such mistakes and what we can do about them. But as I now go through the 5 Keys to staying healthy, you will see how these ideas are based on solid research. We are learning 1) what makes stress worse and more harmful to us, and 2) what can reduce the harmful effects and sometimes even allow stress to be helpful to us. When we aren't aware, we can unknowingly set ourselves up for harm. But how exciting it is to understand that, yes, there is *a lot* we can do to help ourselves stay healthy and thrive, and some of it is quite simple. This is one place where the knowledge alone makes a huge difference. And when we add the easy-to-use tool of EFT, we can really change this picture.

By the way, there are plenty of mistakes not on my list, such as resorting to excessive eating and drinking and other self-medicating activities. We may neglect the good self-care of exercise, healthy eating, meditation, etc. These are, of course, important for health, and are especially essential during stressful times. But I think we are all mostly aware of these, and my purpose here is to share with you the new things I have learned, plus the powerful EFT tapping ideas that have come from these discoveries. And, as you work with these ideas, you will find that the anxiety eases down, there is less need to self-medicate, and good self-care comes more easily.



## 5 Keys to Surviving and Thriving Even During Stressful Times

These ideas may bring you a fresh perspective on the conventional wisdom about stress -- which is mainly that we should have less of it! A great idea, of course, but “stress reduction” and even “stress management” are not always possible. Following this list, I will explain each idea in detail and suggest how you can use it to your benefit.

**Key #1 - UNDERSTAND YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM.** Realize what is happening physically and emotionally and have tools to help calm this powerful reaction so it does not take over.

**Key #2 - UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF THOUGHTS/BELIEFS ON YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM.** Realize the damage that these thoughts do to your system if given free rein. They have physical effects. Have quick and easy strategies to slow down the runaway train of the mind.

**Key #3 - UNDERSTAND THAT THE BODY IS RESPONDING TO EVERY THOUGHT.** New research is showing that our *beliefs about the stress* actually have more to do with our health than the stress itself. Learn how to get in the habit of sending your body the right messages even when stress is off the scale.

**Key #4 - HAVE THE RIGHT TOOLS TO RESPOND QUICKLY TO STRESS.** When you know what to do, you can literally transform the energy of stress into strength and health. There is scientific basis to this which

will be made clear below. For many reasons, EFT is the tool of choice.

**Key #5 - REACH OUT TO OTHERS.** Research has shown that connecting with supportive people, and offering support in return, is one of the most powerful recipes for stress resilience.

### About Key #1

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM

When I was going through a very stressful time not long ago, I was lucky enough to be working with a counselor who had a good understanding of neurology. It helped me immensely to realize that, because I felt under threat, my body's fight or flight response was being triggered. No wonder I was frantic to do something (fight) even though I could not. No wonder I felt trapped and desperate to escape (flight) although I could not. These powerful energies in my body had nowhere to go. It helped a lot to understand this. My body was just trying to get me out of danger -- I had to find ways to calm these impulses and channel that strong energy.

The energy of stress is actually our body's innate protective response which is trying to keep us safe. The problem is, neither fighting nor fleeing are usually useful or even possible with the complex and often psychological stresses that we're confronted with in modern life.

But what if, as you better understand what is happening, you could actually redirect the energy into something helpful? This is exactly what



has been shown effective in recent stress research. Subjects in studies were prepared for a stressful situation by being told that all these physical effects of stress (rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, etc.) would actually help them be at their best and excel. As it turned out, their *belief* about the stress -- that it was useful and helpful -- made a huge difference. Not only did they perform much better, but their physiology changed and the harmful effects of stress never occurred. (See my *Surprising Stress Research* report for full details).

Better yet, add the support of EFT tapping. For me, tapping was a great help during my stressful time. Research has shown the EFT calms the amygdala, the emotional part of the brain that is the source of the fight-or-flight reaction. EFT also reduces the levels of the stress hormone, cortisol. When you tap, the body chemistry of stress is literally turned down. And you are sending calming signals to the part of the brain that triggered the stress response in the first place.

So, one key to health is to *tend to your nervous system*, and I don't know a better way than by using EFT. You can tap to change your brain and help your body. Worksheet 1 in your Transforming Stress Toolkit gives you a number of ways to focus your tapping for any stressful situation. And here is a tapping suggestion that can work well for anything:

*Even though I'm feeling all this stress and anxiety, I acknowledge that my body is trying to protect me from danger... and I'm smoothing out this energy so it can help me do my best...*

## About Key #2

### UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF THOUGHTS/BELIEFS ON THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

I think we all know that we can stress ourselves out with worrying and ruminating on negative possibilities. Our minds can be our own worst enemies.

Stress research is showing that our mental processes, our thoughts and beliefs, have everything to do with how the stress operates in our bodies. The stress chemicals and cascade of potentially harmful effects respond immediately to changes in our thinking. You will find more about this in my report in the toolkit.

The question of what to do is a vast one. Mindfulness meditation and cognitive behavioral therapy are valuable fields which deal with this question and well worth the time and effort it takes to learn and practice them. However, my intention here is to keep it simple -- and suggest EFT. Tapping to the rescue!

One of my clients likes to use a U-Turn, which we smilingly spell “You-Turn.” Whenever she notices a train of thought based on anxiety and worry, she asks herself, “wait! What’s good for YOU right now?” And she does a U-turn with EFT.

*Even though I’m telling myself \_\_\_\_\_ (negative, fearful) and thinking \_\_\_\_\_ (negative, fearful), it’s time to do a U-Turn. Letting these thoughts*

*go and do a YOU-turn..."back to you, (your own name)"... coming back to the present... choosing to being kinder to myself...*

And because she is tapping with this intention, she really feels the effects throughout her system. She calms down and finds better thoughts.

The two processes I give you in Worksheets 2 and 3 in your Transforming Stress Toolkit suggest ways to do this U-turn or "YOU-turn" with EFT. With one, you identify the negative thoughts and choose to be kinder to yourself. With the other, you identify the core beliefs and challenge them, finding a more balanced thought or belief.

The truth is, we would never torture anyone else the way we torture ourselves with our thoughts. Can you imagine verbally beating up on another person who is concerned about a situation by telling them how bad it could get, how unlucky they are, and that everything is probably doomed? It is a cruel person who does that. If another person is dealing with a difficult situation, we know we would encourage and reassure them the best we could.

Please realize that I'm not talking about Pollyanna-type thoughts here. You can't always say, "Don't worry, it'll be alright," because in some life situations, that's not really true. But you can be compassionate - "I know this must be hard." And supportive - "I believe in you. I know you'll do your best and you'll get through it." It's about kindness and turning that kindness back to yourself. Choosing to be kinder to ourselves while adding the tapping process is one effective way to shift

gears and get onto on a better track with our thinking. And this will make a huge difference in how much stress escalates.

Two mp3 recordings of mine have helped a lot of people become aware of negative thought patterns and change them. They are the “Breaking the Cycle of Self-Created Stress” recordings, and they are available to you for free in your Transforming Stress Toolkit.

**About Key #3**  
**UNDERSTANDING THAT THE BODY IS RESPONDING**  
**TO EVERY THOUGHT**

One of the most astounding things that new research has revealed is that there is a strong correlation between a person’s BELIEF that stress is harming them and the actual physical effects of the stress. Yes -- if you believe that stress is hurting your health, it is more likely that it will. Beliefs can be dangerous. In one study, there was an over 40% greater rate of mortality among those who believed stress was harming them than those who did not hold that belief.

This seems tragic. Aren’t we supposed to have the enlightened understanding that we are whole people and that the mental/emotional stresses we go through are affecting our bodies? Yes, but I would say that we need to take that understanding one step further: there is indeed a connection, but we have a lot of power to determine *what kind of connection*. Believing in our bodies’ innate health and giving our bodies the right messages can make all the difference.

Your worksheet #4 gives you many suggestions for how to use EFT to instill the right messages and strengthen the body in spite of stress. Perhaps my favorite is tapping language that affirms the body's power to stay healthy and encourages the body with "I believe in you":

*Even though I'm under a lot of stress, I love and accept and believe in my body... I have a strong and healthy body... I believe that my body will stay healthy and help me through this... I appreciate my strong and healthy body...*

### About Key #4

## HAVING THE RIGHT TOOLS TO RESPOND QUICKLY TO STRESS

Remember that the biological purpose of the stress response is to *keep us safe*. What are the qualities and inner resources we most need to handle the complexities of stressful situations and get through them as safely as possible? How about the following:

- clear thinking
- good decision-making
- courage and the ability to set boundaries
- effective communication
- inner strength, patience, fortitude
- creativity and thinking outside the box
- resourcefulness to find and use resources/support
- a spiritual connection to something greater than ourselves

...to name just a few.

Two things **not** on this list are *physically fighting* or *actually running away*. The fight-or-flight energies may be useful occasionally but are not usually helpful with our complex modern challenges.

I fully believe that skillful use of EFT can channel most of that energy into strength and clarity. Of course, this is not the only way. But tapping is easy and very effective and a terrific “first aid” for stress. Two very important things happen when we tap:

- we calm the panicked *brain* and restore our ability to think clearly and in a balanced way (we return to “our right mind” - the prefrontal cortex takes charge rather than the amygdala).
- we soothe and relax the tense *physical body*, tone down the potentially harmful body chemistry of stress, and restore health, physical strength and well-being, immunity and healing power.

Under those conditions, we are much more able to function well, perhaps even be at our best. There is powerful energy in the stress. This is why I created a “Transforming Stress Toolkit” rather than one to “reduce” or “manage” stress. If reducing that outer stressor is possible, great. If not, I really think it is about transforming this strong energy into health, strength, and clarity. We can even tap with this in mind:

*Even though I’m feeling this intensity, I appreciate that my body is trying to protect me... transforming this powerful energy into what I really need (clarity, calm confidence, patience, courage, etc.)*

## About Key #5

### REACHING OUT TO OTHERS

Finally, there is compelling evidence that we are biologically programmed to *need each other* during stressful times. It is a surprise for most people to discover that oxytocin, the hormone associated with cuddles and warm fuzzies, is actually a stress hormone -- more oxytocin is released in our system during times of stress.

This is the “I need a hug!” feeling. And if we reach out and get those hugs, that creates more oxytocin in our system. As it turns out, this is one of the best things we can do for our physical health. Oxytocin helps to heal the damage stress may have caused and reverse the effects of stress in the body. Mentally, emotionally, and even physically, we need connection. We need to ask for help and support. Touch is the most powerful, yet all kinds of social support can be “hugs,” increasing our feeling of connection. And there are even greater health benefits to paying it forward and giving support in return (see my report).

So a major key to health is to *resist our temptation to isolate* during difficult times. Often we withdraw because of shame and embarrassment, and fear of being so vulnerable. And yet, this very vulnerability is what will connect us the most deeply with others. EFT can ease the way:

*Even though I feel some embarrassment and shame about my difficulties, I can accept myself with kindness and compassion... and trust that the right people want to help me...I'm open to connection...*



It is of course important to reach out to the right people, those who are safe and non-judgmental. As they say, difficult times may show you who your friends really are -- but you have to give them a chance.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

In his excellent book on stress, *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*, biologist and neurologist Robert M. Sapolsky explains that the absolutely most stressful condition for humans and animals alike is powerlessness -- not knowing what is coming, having no control and no way to make a difference in the situation.

I hope these “five keys” have shown you that WE CAN EMPOWER OURSELVES during stressful times. We really can. We can't always change the outer world when those curveballs come our way, but we can intervene powerfully in our own nervous system. We can help our stressed bodies, minds and emotions, by bringing mindful attention to our thoughts and beliefs, and by applying the effective tool of EFT.

## MY INVITATION TO YOU

The Transforming Stress Toolkit that I'm providing as a gift (a \$47 value) is something that you can use over time. Here are all your downloads:

<http://www.creativeeft.com/transforming-stress-toolkit/>

Bookmark the link above and listen to the recordings on a smartphone or tablet, or download them to your computer. Print out the worksheets to target your tapping and go deeper. And do read my Surprising Stress Research report, which gives you more details about the ideas I've explained. It also tells some of my personal story.

It is especially because of a prolonged and hugely stressful time in my own life that I was drawn to learning more about stress and that I want to reach out and share what I have learned.

I hope will receive some benefits! Please do stay on my mailing list so I can share more with you, including some exciting upcoming webinars and new Creative EFT offerings that are in the works.

To your health and well-being!

*Betty*



PS A big thank you to Kelly McGonigal, PhD, whose 15-min. TED talk inspired me to read this research and put some of the ideas together in this ebook. Catch her talk here:

<http://kellymcgonigal.com/2013/12/31/watch-my-ted-talk-how-to-make-stress-your-friend/>