

Managing Stress Through Interiorization

From Keeping an Eye on Health, by Dr. Cláudia Pacheco

French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre's famous statement—"Hell is the other people"—illustrates the commonly held assumption that others (our boss, mother-in-law, husband, wife, colleagues, parents, government etc.) are to blame for our problems, frustrations and lack of success. Almost everybody believes that we become ill because we are victims of an attack by bacteria, viruses, defective genes that we got from our parents or environmental pollutants. Or that our problems occur because we have too little (or too much) money, or we are too young or too old, or because we have a lack of opportunity, or even because we were born under an unfavorable astrological aspect or we carry bad karma from previous lives. We seldom think that our worst enemy is inside and that we often act unconsciously.

Illness as an attitude

Psychoanalyst Norberto R. Keppe has introduced an innovative concept: our illness does not "exist" by itself. Instead, it comes from attitudes that we adopt about life. Whenever I experience a particular negative attitude, feeling, thought or action, I am "fabricating" a mental or physical illness in my life, in my relationships, at work etc. The moment I change my attitude and adopt a healthier one, I regain equilibrium.

Of course, every one of us expresses many neurotic and even psychotic attitudes throughout our lives. A well-balanced person can be defined as someone who is willing to work with these problems—or rather, a person who does not censor the consciousness of their own psychopathology and the pathology of others and society.

Others are our mirror

If all of us have within us much that is neurotic and even psychotic, then others are mirrors that can teach us things about ourselves. The most practical, direct way to gain self-knowledge is to see that what bothers us in others is precisely that which we have poorly resolved (kept unconscious) within ourselves. Likewise, what pleases us in others is a quality we possess too, but that we inconstantize or repress.

A colleague at work who irritates me with his megalomaniac, selfish behavior, who acts as if he is the center of the universe, who speaks only about things that relate to him without being aware that he is preventing others from doing their work, could be mirroring something—for example: how much I avoid doing important things and how I lose myself in selfish thoughts or worry about superfluous things.

At the same time, when it bothers me to see how a friend throws away her chances for success and constantly puts herself down, if I see how she is insecure andn unconfident, I can recognize some reasons for the shortcomings in my own life.

This being the case, we can get to know our inner selves through conscientization, using things that happen outside ourselves as a reference.