

Does Stress Validate Our Existence?

--Julie Gray

I hear it a thousand times a day. I used to say it as often: "I'm *so* stressed out" or "I'm *so* busy" or "I'm *so* tired". It has become a badge of belonging here in Los Angeles, and, I suspect, across much of America as well. How often have you proclaimed your absolute exhaustion? And -- what does that mean, exactly? Many of us actually *opt* to feel terrible and stressed. We want to feel this way. We *need* to feel this way. Being stressed out and tired validates our existence as being, in some way, indispensable. If you are relaxed, happy and rested, you must be a real slouch. But being tired, well, that means you are on the go, a real mover and shaker -- what you do is important!

We say it constantly -- "I'm a *wreck!*", "The kids drove me *crazy* today!", " You wouldn't *believe* the day I had!", " I have so *much* to do!" ... But -- *was* it that bad? Is this how we really want to feel in the day-to-day? I absolutely believe that we can, moment by moment, choose how we feel. And no, it's not easy. It's not easy at all, to choose to feel good when one feels excluded, or unimportant or overwhelmed. But it is possible to feel, if not good, a little bit better.

Ask yourself how you want to feel, most of the time. Most of us would say peaceful, happy and relaxed. Well, of course. But many of us proclaim just the opposite, over and over again each day. In America, we value working hard and being tired. Our personal and professional lives are blurred beyond recognition. Being tired is a badge of honor. Being jaded is a badge of experience. Being sarcastic is a badge of great intellect.

In a city, a country and a time full of people convinced that money and material trappings are equal to success and happiness, can you still know that this is not true and be happy just to be living and breathing? Can you know that your conscious choices and thoughts can direct your life to new vistas? It is truly revolutionary to opt to feel good, as much as you can. To describe your days positively, to self-soothe when it wasn't so positive, to be kind to oneself and to stop caring what everybody else thinks. You can change your life by adopting this way of thinking. It's the choosing to feel better and recognizing that feeling good, as much as one can, is what life is all about.

For in feeling good, you are a more effective, loving mother, father, employee, performer, friend or boss. You enjoy your days and nights more -- for you don't really know how many of those were allotted you. So feel good. And stop saying you don't. Believe that you are needed, important, effective and hard-working simply because you live and breathe on this planet. It's not only okay to feel good, it's your prerogative and your birthright.

*The full text of this article was published in Huffington Post
/ May 2011 / Word count: 512*