

Are You a “Fuddy-Duddy”?

by Carol Sullivan

Does this term come from the so-called F.U.D. factor? F.U.D. stands for fear, uncertainty, and doubt. These three emotions are fundamental to stress, largely because they add up to a perceived loss of control, a frequent precursor to anger. Does everything have to be perfect in order to prevent the world falling apart? Do you feel you have to be perfect all the time just to be acceptable? Do you fear loss of respect and affection if you can't please all of the people all of the time? If we think quietly and honestly, we will all find some situations where our worry is out of proportion to the problem.

Stress, when overdone, is dis-stress; and distress is not healthy. It challenges our heart and blood vessels, and it saps our immune system. If a charging rhino is chasing you, you need all of your “fight or flight” chemicals to survive. It is not so important for the moment that your relaxing brain chemicals are repressed or that you are more vulnerable to catching the flu, or even that you are more likely to develop diabetes or cancer. Some people are constantly feeding their bodies toxic doses of epinephrine, equating being stuck in traffic with fighting for their very lives. How do you react to fear, uncertainty, and doubt? What effect does this have on you and on those around you? Do you save panic for situations worthy of it?

The holidays are upon us. On the surface, these are happy times, but they can easily be sabotaged by fear, uncertainty, and doubt. Will there be enough cookies, will Uncle Montose over-indulge and cause a scene again, where will the money come from? How do you react to fear, uncertainty, and doubt? How does your F.U.D. rating differ for problems like dealing with a fire in the kitchen and choosing whether to cut your Christmas tree or get an artificial one?

Ways to diffuse stress before it becomes distress include exercise, meditation, and laughter. You might also want to replace the F.U.D. factor with the N.I.C.E. factor. This relabeling of “problem” stands for “new, interesting, and challenging experience.” Wouldn't you rather be Nice than a Fuddy-Duddy?

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