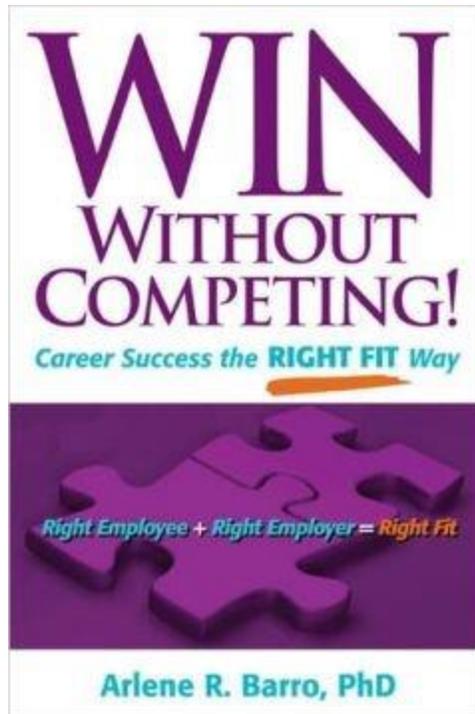


# Conquering Stress! With Dr. Arlene—Change Causes Stress



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The 2016 election of president-elect Trump, a billionaire entrepreneur, is a historical change in presidential prototype which resulted in the unprecedented stress of millions of people. From my recent observations he is highly organized, decisive, and determined to put people in place before the inauguration. He is using the same strategies that made him a successful businessman to build his team. Trump's approach minimizes his stress. At age 70, Trump takes his first job.. We are his employers.

According to Sigmund Freud, "It is the eternal changefulness of life that makes it so beautiful." For those who take change in stride, the presidential election is an excellent test to evaluate your stress management skills. For those who have difficulty managing stress, casting off the shackles of rigidity will significantly reduce your stress.

In the last quarter of every year, we have a wide array of changes. Some we initiate and others we are the recipient of or even the victim. For example, did you capture a new position or were you downsized, remaining unemployed for many months? Did you start a new business or forced to close your doors? How you manage new beginnings will determine your stress level.

## **Self-Talk Influences New Beginnings**

What you say to yourself about each new beginning will determine your stress level. Do not make the erroneous assumption that what appears to be a negative new start must cause significant stress. It is your response that is critical. Esta's story, a widowed woman in her 70's, was suddenly diagnosed with cancer. Shortly before she was diagnosed she fell in love with a widowed man who visited her daily, supporting her emotionally. Even though her adult children did not like him, she never let that influence her relationship. She submerged herself in positive self-talk. She did not focus on dying even though it was imminent. She remained positive, keeping her stress low. When she died, the man in her life attended her funeral and cried uncontrollably. He had lost his best friend, forever grateful that he was there for her.

Esta was a highly successful businesswoman who had a strong mental core. Even though her physical core became weaker and weaker, her mental core founded on strong determination, never deteriorated. Remember Esta's story to boost your positive self-talk.

## **Why Are Holiday Traditions Stressful?**

Stress is inherent in practicing traditions. Many believe that customs should not be changed for Thanksgiving, Christmas, Chanukah, and New Year's. The policy of "no change" causes stress for those who want to do things differently and may not want to speak up. I conducted a small survey asking the participants what caused them holiday stress. Gift-giving was a popular response. Concerns about pleasing people, spending money, and allocating time to buy gifts were discussed.

Husbands and wives may view gift-giving differently. The lack of agreement between spouses causes stress. If rigid behavior continues with no changes made, stress will continue. For those who believe that you change traditions to suit your needs, alleviating stress is simple. One person who participated in the survey said that he likes to gift people by spending time with them. He does not believe that he must give material gifts only. His wife, on the other hand, wants to give everyone in the family a gift. How do you handle gift-giving? Remember, it is up to you to speak up and change traditions, if stress is interfering with your holiday enjoyment.

## **The Fallacy of New Year's Resolutions**

Who decided that we should change our behavior at the beginning of each new year? We need to change our behavior throughout the year in order to thrive and maintain low stress. If you implement my strategy, then making and retaining the change is easier. If you wait till the end of the year, and make many resolutions it may be more difficult to make many changes concurrently than one at a time throughout the year, as the need arises.

I recommend that if you want to make a New Year's Resolution that you pick one. If changing your behavior is not easy for you then think about saying this: "In 2017 I will shed the cloak of rigidity to change the trajectory of my life." Author Erica Jong observed, we make our own prisons. Is rigidity your prison?

Questions about stress? Email: [drbarro@barroglobal.com](mailto:drbarro@barroglobal.com). My response to your question could appear in my next column.

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