



For Fox Sake...Second Hand Stress? ...

Become a sensor like the FOX and Be Alert to the Power and Impact of Second Hand Stress



As we navigate this third lockdown, working from home has exposed us all to a whole new set of stresses. 'Who is on the internet?', 'my zoom won't work!', 'the boss just isn't getting it', 'I can't deal with this today', 'My brain is fried!' – all sound familiar?

The research calls this 'Second Hand Stress'. When someone yawns, you yawn too, even if they are in California and you're in Dubai. Nature has hard wired us to *emotional contagion* in the same way that a yawn does. Someone else's stress, your partner, your children, your manager, or a complete stranger can up-

end your day. The stranger in the supermarket who is becoming angry and tense in the queue, your partner who is having a meltdown after a meeting, your kids missing their friends, and you are now taking on all their stress as well as your own!

Thanks to evolution we are innately alert to potential threats, causing an automatic immediate reaction. This can manifest through your emotions with a 'trigger' response, like retaliation, aggression, tears, anger, walking out the door or a feeling of being overwhelmed.

On a physical level this is because of an increased rate in the stress hormone cortisol;

40% if its someone close to you

26% if you are simply watching someone who is stressed

24% if watching on a screen (HBR Achor S, Gielan M.)

Just think of all the Covid stories you are continually watching! Some research suggests you can even 'smell' the degree of stress of a person nearby.

FOUR Tips for Managing Second Hand Stress

1. **Start** your conversations, zoom calls etc on a positive note. Don't fall prey to contagious negative openers like 'I'm swamped'. You can create the 'power lead' to short circuit a negative encounter. Try something like 'It's really good to talk to you today' or my special favourite is 'really lovely to hear your voice.'
2. **Accept** The key to uncertainty is acceptance, not passive acceptance but active. In other words, use C.A.L.M : **C**.hange what you can **A**.ccept what you cannot change **L**.et go what doesn't serve you and **M**.anage or **M**.ove on what you can.



3. **Focus** on what you can control, ask yourself : what do you have capacity for right now?
4. **Proper Selfishness** – Being this is the most unselfish thing you can do : make sure you put your own Oxygen mask on first.

Finally, back to 'The Fox'.....

If you want to start sparing yourself second hand stress then become clever like a fox.

FOX

Freedom - Choose your own thoughts

Optimism - Believe in the possible

X marks the spot - Be at the centre of your own world