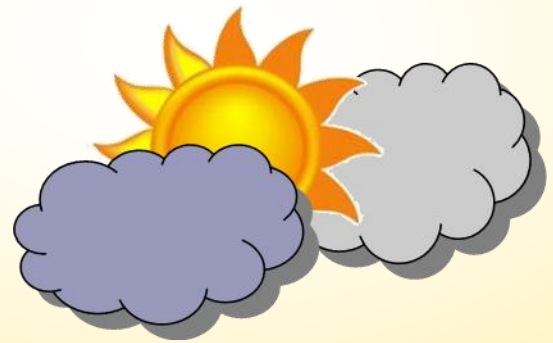


Pondering Point

We know what stress looks like, feels like and in some cases sounds like. Nonetheless we cannot avoid stressful situations. There are times during stress that we feel an obligation to make decisions or take action. However, the best time to act may not be when our emotions are clouding our judgment. When stressed and emotional we may not be able to see the problem for what it is. Stress can take a toll on us physically with headaches, muscle aches and other distractions. **When we are only able to deal with stress in a negative way we fail to manage it and deny ourselves the ability to find a solution.** Perhaps it is best to distance ourselves from the situation and clear our heads.

Some stressful situations can be anticipated. We may have the foresight to bring others in to comfort and give us support. Other times these situations are not anticipated. We may not have the luxury of excusing ourselves to gather our feelings. How do we buy time to center ourselves? If we don't have this time, we may have to ask for a time-out or refuse to move on until we ask ourselves some key questions. *Is this stress something that needs to be dealt with immediately? Is the stress as real as we are making it out to be? Is the real issue that we are assuming the stress of others?* **Putting a name to our emotions may help us get back into the situation with a calmer perspective.**

Are we thinking clearly when we are CLOUDED by stress?



Imagine... clearing the clouds of your emotions and making way for clearer thinking.

— From Pondering to Practice —

Activity:

- Take your stress offline and decompress with someone else.
- This may be in the form of a rant or just breathing.
- Allow the other person to distract and calm you or to help put things into perspective.

-- OR --

- Tell them you're going to count backwards from 50 and you want them to join in at 40.
- Progressively get slower and softer after each interval of 10.

This may help you be more relaxed, less emotional and clearer about the situation and how you want to proceed.

Reflection:

Think of what stresses you out...

- *Is your stress real?*
 - *Is it as big as you are making it?*
- *Is it only yours?*
 - *Are you letting the stress of others cloud you?*
- *Can you identify the emotions you are feeling right now?*

Find something to ground you – something to focus on or a person to connect with to put things into perspective.

"For fast-acting relief, try slowing down."

- Lily Tomlin