

feature

‘Destressifying’ with Davidji



**Davidji** is an internationally recognized stress-management expert, corporate trainer, meditation teacher, and author of the critically acclaimed and Amazon #1 Bestseller, “Destressifying: The Real-World Guide to Personal Empowerment, Lasting Fulfillment, and Peace of Mind”; and “Secrets of Meditation: A Practical Guide to Inner Peace & Personal Transformation,” winner of the Nautilus Book Award. He is credited with creating the 21-day meditation process, which spawned hundreds of 21-day meditation experiences & challenges around the world. Davidji was here for the X Yoga festival and Viki Shah talks to him to know more...



#### WHAT LED YOU TO WHERE YOU ARE? WHAT INSPIRED YOU?

For many years I worked in the worlds of finance and business amid the wild corporate swirl of New York City. For a time I even worked on one of the higher floors of the World Trade Center in Tower 2, now referred to as Ground Zero. It was a career many would be proud of and to look at my life I should have had everything. But I was miserable.

One day I realized—as my life was spinning out of physical and emotional balance—I had stopped meditating, a practice that had once brought me joy and deep fulfillment. Instead, I often awoke at 2 a.m. with a painful knot in my stomach that stayed there through the day and into the evening. I ate my lunch at my desk while texting, chatting on my cell phone, typing e-mails, and wolfing down a sandwich . . . all in five minutes. And I realized I had been doing that for almost fifteen years.

I was sleepwalking through my life—waking up, burning through the day, performing my “job,” coming home, eating dinner, reading a book or watching TV, and passing out. I felt empty, adrift from any guiding principle, and was second-guessing my choices in life. I started to question the value I contributed to those in my life. My personal and work relationships were stressed and strained. Believing my options were limited and convinced there was no way out, I was desperate to re-write the



script of my life. If only I knew how.

And so one day in SoHo, as I walked past a row of cardboard boxes in which homeless people were living, a soot-covered hand reached out and grabbed my pant leg. Suddenly the moment began revealing itself in slow motion. A curious face peered up at me and asked, “What’s gonna be on your tombstone?” Face to face, soul to soul—connected in a transcendent, cosmic moment, it took my breath away.

All the street sounds and voices around us faded into the background as a high-pitched whoosh encased my head like the sound in your ears as you lay in bed after you’ve attended a really loud concert. He tightened his grip on my pant leg, pulling my attention down with his fingers as he hoisted his body up, and inching his face a bit closer. We leaned into each other and matched gazes. Time stood still as our eyes locked for what seemed an eternity.

Tears came to my eyes, and I mouthed the words to him, “I don’t know.” My mind was a tsunami of thoughts, memories, and desires. Yet, now, sensing his knuckles resting on my »



shoe with his open palm face up, I assumed he was asking for some charity and I reached into my pocket intending to give him a few dollars. Clairvoyantly, he reached up to stop me and pressed his hand against my pocket, pinning my hand inside it. “It’s not about the money. The answer is in the stars,” he counseled in a raspy whisper. “Just find your sacred powers.”

I wandered aimlessly for hours after that, his pointed words reverberating through every cell in my body. What was going to be on my tombstone? What was my purpose? I felt like a prisoner living eternally on death row, stuck in a painful purgatory with no reason for being.

My mind was overflowing with smoke-filled images of the collapse of Tower Two, just blocks south of the downtown office building, where my staff and I had stood on the roof and watched in horror on that fateful day. So many we knew and loved and so many more we’d never get to know. For me, the psychological fallout from 9/11 drifted somewhere between emptiness, a profound sense of emotional grief, and a primal wake-up call—the deep need to live a life of purpose.

That night, as I shared my day’s story with my wife over dinner, she handed me a piece of paper. She had sensed my daily pain and had explored a few deeper options for me to consider. One was a meditation retreat in England with Deepak Chopra. She encouraged me to follow my heart. A

work colleague advised me, “Jump and the net will appear.” One of my yoga teachers suggested, “Quit your job today. The universe will provide.”

And so, my journey began...

#### WHAT IS HAPPINESS IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT TIMES? HOW CAN ONE BE HAPPY? IS IT POSSIBLE FOR ANYONE TO BE TRULY HAPPY?

The Sufi poet Hafiz is known to have said, when all your desires are distilled, you will cast but two votes... to love more or to be happy. We are here to love and to raise the vibration of the planet. Happiness comes from within us with each breath, thought, word and action. So no matter what’s going on in the world outside of us, as long as we authentically radiate peace, love, and compassion, then our lives will unfold with happiness, grace, and ease.

#### HOW DOES YOGA AND MEDITATION HELP TO BE IN A STRESS-FREE HAPPY STATE?

I wrote an entire book called “destressifying” on this subject. The definition of stress is how you respond when your needs are not met. Destressifiers (those who use the tools of destressifying such as identifying and consciously expressing their needs; practicing 16 seconds of breathing throughout the day; and starting each morning with meditation) better understand their core needs, have greater

clarity regarding their prioritization, more consistently meet them, and – in those instances when their needs are not met – their bodies & minds respond in a unique way known as the destressified response where they transcend overwhelm, remind themselves of their innate strengths, clearly see the resources available, and leverage the silver lining in the moment – moving beyond any dark clouds they detect on the horizon.

Essentially, the counterpart to the fight-or-flight response, the destressified response occurs when the body senses it is no longer in perceived danger (physical or emotional), and all the functions of the mind body return to normal. As we destressify, the body moves from a state of physiological arousal, to one of physiological relaxation and our:

- Breathing slows and becomes quieter
- Pulse decelerates easing our blood pressure.
- Digestive functions normalize as blood returns to our intestines.
- Stress hormones (adrenalin, glucagon, and cortisol) slow their surges.
- Immune system strengthens.
- Platelets becomes less sticky and blood flows more easily.

Accompanying this destressified physiological state of relaxation, are powerful mindbody benefits that impact our thoughts, how we interpret information,

and how we respond to the world. Morning Meditation is the key... as are daily breathing techniques such as taking 16 seconds to BE present in turbulent moments and at 10am, noon, 2pm, 4pm, 6pm, and right before bed. As you begin to destressify, you will notice more & more that you are:

- **less emotionally turbulent**
- **more patient**
- **a better listener**
- **less over-whelmed**
- **more focused and clearer**
- **less fidgety**
- **more relaxed, and**
- **truly, the calm amidst the chaos.**

Try it right now! – simply watching your breathing for 16 seconds...in for four seconds...hold for 4 seconds...exhale for 4 seconds...and holding the breath out for 4 seconds as you ease back into normal breathing.

As you continue to cultivate your meditation practice, you will start to become more comfortable with your authentic self – the true self that rests beneath all of your veneer... Rather than buy-in to your most constricted and conditioned behaviors, you will suddenly find that you are more fluid and more intuitive and more creative...a better problem solver.

#### HOW CAN ONE COPE WITH THE STRESS OF MODERN LIVING? HOW CAN ONE REMAIN MOTIVATED WITH SO MANY DAILY CHALLENGES?

See my above answer.

#### HAS STRESS EVER BEEN AN INSPIRATIONAL SUBJECT FOR YOU?

A few years ago, I wrote “destressifying The Real-World Guide to Personal Empowerment, Lasting Fulfillment, and Peace of Mind,” a book dedicated to anyone who has ever experienced the pain in their belly, the tightness in their chest, the weight on their heart, the throb in their temple, the clench in their jaw, the closing of their throat, the holding in of their breath, and the not holding in of a harsh word... and to all those who breathe in stress every day only to have it fulfill them, to inspire and motivate



them to be the best version of themselves.

You can learn about it at <https://davidji.com/destressifynow/>

#### HOW CAN WE GAIN CONTROL OF OUR EMOTIONS/FEELINGS? DO WE VOICE THEM?

Simply put, emotions are subjective, conscious experiences that link our interpretation of a given moment to a biological reaction creating a particular mental state. Have you ever yelled at someone -after having a tough time or a difficult encounter- over something that had nothing to do with them? Psychologists refer to this misdirection as “emotional leakage.” When you suppress emotions, you’re likely to express them inadvertently in other avenues by being snide, sarcastic, snarky, retaliatory, biting, harsh, or downright mean to people who had nothing to do with your initial frustration. Suppressing our feelings is now scientifically proven to lead to poor memory, relationship challenges, and deeper health issues as our body is influenced so strongly by our subjective conscious experiences.

We can rise above the constriction by heightening our emotional intelligence, known as EI in many leadership, psychology, and philosophy circles. »

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***El is essentially our ability to “own” these four capabilities:***

1. Correctly perceive emotions
2. Retrieve and produce emotions to assist thought
3. Comprehend emotions and understand them, and
4. Effectively adjust emotions to promote personal development and growth

If you don't know how you feel or why you feel a certain way, you will experience emotional overwhelm or confusion and won't be able to communicate effectively, meet your needs, or resolve disagreements. But if we master our emotional intelligence, you will flow with less stress, more grace, and greater ease. And, the more successful we are at heightening these core skill sets, the happier and more fulfilled we will be.

### **IS IT POSSIBLE TO BECOME MINDFUL IN ALL THAT WE DO? HOW TO ACHIEVE THAT?**

Of course! Meditation is a key component to achieving mindfulness.

### **WHAT ABOUT UNEXPECTED CHALLENGES/OBSTACLES? HOW CAN ONE PREPARE FOR THAT?**

Destressifying is not a term we often think about, but it is essential to our wholeness as individuals. It is our capacity to prepare for, recover from, and adapt in the face of uncertainty, overwhelm, disappointment, stress, adversity, trauma, or tragedy. We're not simply talking about bouncing back after we've faced a challenge, but rather mastering our perception of the moment and cultivating our natural ability to seize that moment and express our best version of ourselves in the face of a demanding, difficult, and taxing situation.

In that process, we self-actualize, we grow, and we thrive. You don't need to be living life on the edge to destressify—you simply need to be human and to have the desire to express yourself at the highest level. We are all conditioned beings with ancient, primal, biological responses deeply embedded in our DNA. Our emotional defensiveness and reactivity have been woven into the fabric of our thinking by our culture, our parents, our siblings, our schooling, our experiences, our bosses, our colleagues, our children, our partners, our exes, and the early authority figures

present during our wonder years. The ripples of those relationships flow through us every day. We all face stress and we will continue to—in our big moments and our quiet contemplations. destressifying will allow you to face it; move through it; transcend it with grace and ease; and come out the other side stronger, calmer, braver, clearer, more powerful, and masterful in living life on planet Earth.

### **YOUR TOP TIPS TO OUR READERS TO LEAD A HAPPY LIFE:**

When we look to our most genuine selves—beneath our flesh casing, beyond life's drama, and outside of the moment-to-moment conditioning we have bought into or self-imposed—we see that life's richness is available to us in every moment. We are open to a vast infinity of wealth consciousness. Even when it so obviously appears that there is only one ticket left, only one option available, or a single slice

of the pie remaining, these are simply illusions of the moment. In reality, the pie is big . . . really big, and growing bigger.

The Sacred Power of Abundance always guides us to place our attention on meeting our needs rather than the constriction or blockage that separates us from the fulfillment of that need. But a mind-set conditioned with poverty consciousness tends to focus on perceived limitations. That gap between what we desire in a given moment and what appears to be available can be a powerful spark for our creative solution.

Awakening the Sacred Power of Abundance reveals that the pie is ever expanding, and there is more of everything if we shatter the way we see the world. When we look really deep, we realize that the fear, lack, and poverty consciousness we often embrace are indeed self-imposed or projected on us by what we read, hear, and see. But that's not who we are. ✨

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