



Co-Hosts: Dr. Daphne Scott and Dr. Katie Hendricks
Episode 35: Change Your Mind and Change Your Stress
November 21, 2014

Daphne Scott: Welcome to the Super Fantastic Leadership Show podcast with Daphne Scott and...

Katie Hendricks: Katie Hendricks!

Daphne: This is *the* podcast devoted to supporting you in leading at the highest levels of effectiveness with the greatest levels of fun.

Katie: Yes, we're all about fun and effectiveness dancing together, emphasis on *dancing*, as in moving and breathing and enjoying yourself.

Daphne: Oh, you mean actually using our bodies?

Katie: Yeah, using your body and actually being in your body.

Daphne: Yeah, we're going to talk about that. Katie and I were having a little conversation before we started the show today about body intelligence and how it has been sort of excluded from our consciousness. I think you have a summit that's coming up, Katie?

Katie: Yeah, we have a summit that's coming up in February, which I'm going to be telling you all about over the next couple of months as we're getting ready for it.

Daphne: Fantastic. Well, today we're going to be talking about the body and the mind, because they both exist.

Katie: And they're connected. Isn't that amazing?

Daphne: Unbeknownst to Descartes who said they weren't, but never mind. We won't talk about that. Yeah, they are connected. They're not separate. We're going to be talking about stress.

Katie: Yes, *stress*, that word that is so ubiquitous.

Daphne: So ubiquitous, yes. Nice adjective. So how we stress ourselves out and what to do about it. It's something we all are managing from time to time, varying levels of it. I think we're going to give it a little bit of a spin. I don't know. What do you think, Katie?

Katie: I think it's going to be a different kind of a spin and not like the kind you get when your washing machine isn't working properly.

Daphne: Yeah, not like that. That's a good metaphor. So that's what we're going to be talking about, but we'd better do our appreciation time. Today I want to appreciate breathing and the breath. This fits in with stress, because one of the things I know about me, Katie... I'm sure it's true for everyone, but especially me. When I get myself under enough stress, my breathing becomes very shallow. It's one of the ways I can keep myself in the stress loop. I also just had this appreciation... Currently, no matter what's happening in my life, I'm still breathing.

Katie: Every evidence would indicate that you are still breathing.

Daphne: I'm still here. I'm still breathing, and guess what? For me, breathing is happening effortlessly. It's the one thing in my life I don't have to effort about. I'm just being breathed, if you will.

Katie: I love that phrase *being breathed*. I appreciate so much. I'm going to add on to that appreciation, and how much I appreciate breathing. It leads me to appreciate my husband Gay, who has been focusing on the power of breathing for over 40 years and from whom I've learned so much about the consciousness ripple, the expansion of joy and creativity and connection with myself and others that can come from breathing. So I love it that you're bringing up breathing. I also appreciate that I can learn more about breathing and how to enjoy my breathing more and more every day.

Daphne: I like that. Enjoying your breathing. That's something I haven't thought about. I do enjoy when I take a big inhale. That's the reset button for me for sure.

Katie: Yes, you can reset things and renew and let go of and open up to, all kinds of things, through the doorway of breathing.

Daphne: Well, we'll get on with our topic, then, speaking of breathing. Breathing is one of the ways we can manage stress.

Katie: It is, but let's not get ahead of ourselves here, because first we have to dig into the pain points, don't you know.

Daphne: Yes, yes, yes. Let's go there first. Okay, stress. What is it, Katie?

Katie: Well, *stress* is the best marketing term people have come up with in the last 30 years. It's a great selling point. My favorite stress story is from the TM initiator Maharishi, who when he first came here told people in his lectures, "You know, life is bliss, and if you meditate, your life will become even more blissful." Nobody came to his lectures. He went back to India and

thought it over, and he came back about six months later, and his message was, "Life is stress, and if you meditate, you will decrease the level of stress in your life." Of course, thousands and thousands of people flocked to learn how to meditate.

Stress has been defined by all kinds of people in many different ways. There's a certain level which without it we wouldn't really be moving and evolving, because it's a little bit like creative tension. You need a little bit of something to push against normally in order to expand, but for most people, stress... I think of it as having a burr under the blanket on the saddle all the time.

Daphne: I love your metaphors. You should write a book of metaphors.

Katie: Thank you. I've been metaphorically flowering today.

Daphne: Yes, a burr under the blanket of your saddle. I like that. That's really what we're talking about, more what has been defined as *chronic stress*, the kind that can give you a heart attack. The point I want to make here, Katie, which I think is not talked about enough...

We need some stress to grow. One of the metaphors I use is that when I work a muscle in the gym, if I'm lifting weights to get stronger, that's stressing my muscular system. I might get sore afterwards and need to recover. I don't *keep* working the muscular system day in and day out, because that wouldn't be good. But one of the points I want to make about stress that there aren't a lot of people writing about is it's not necessarily just your external circumstances.

Katie: Yeah, that's a really good point. We think it comes from the outside and we have to deal with something, like too much to do, or the people in our lives are demanding so many things we can't get our work done or something going on at work that has changed that's making everything much harder. We think of it as coming all from outside, but what I hear you suggesting is that there is an inside well of stress that most of us don't realize we're tapping into all the time.

Daphne: Yes, that is exactly what I'm suggesting. I don't know in your experience, Katie, but oftentimes when I am experiencing stress... I've just noticed this in my thinking patterns. Well over the majority of the time, I am imagining some disastrous future for myself.

Katie: Yes, what we sometimes call *catastrophizing*.

Daphne: Yes, catastrophizing and ruminating on that.

Katie: I'm either catastrophizing about something coming or I'm rehashing something that I feel embarrassed about or didn't work well from the past.

Daphne: Correct. That really doesn't have a whole lot to do with my immediate circumstances, because oftentimes when I'm doing that I might be eating a bowl of ice cream or sitting quietly somewhere, like in a coffee shop.

Katie: Or listening to music, going on a walk with your beloved, and then suddenly the rumination starts.

Daphne: Yes. I'm not wanting to imply that we don't have external circumstances or moments in our lives that are stressful, like company change, job changes, and those sorts of things, but I just have the sneaky feeling that a way we could talk about this would be from the perspective of we are creating most of it in our minds and with our thinking.

Katie: Yeah, I think we can make a good case for that. I'm with you.

Daphne: All right, let's do it then, now that I know you agree with me. I wouldn't want us to have an argumentative show.

Katie: Well, hey, that could provide some stress for people.

Daphne: It could. Especially for us. I want to bring in this idea first (this has been around for a while, but I just want to bring this in) around how we talk to ourselves, how we explain to ourselves about the events that have been happening. They found, Katie, that there's this idea of optimistic explanatory styles and pessimistic explanatory styles. Now I know you're familiar with some of this, because it fits in a little bit with this idea of learned helplessness.

I'll say more about optimistic and pessimistic in a minute, but what they found from the research... These horrible learned helplessness studies with animals. You know, they'd shock them and put them in these situations where they could get away from the shock or the negative feedback, if you would. Some of them wouldn't. They would just not move, even though they could escape, so to speak. This was from Martin Seligman's research.

What he got really interested in was the ones that didn't become helpless. He was really turned on by this. He thought, "What is *that* about? I get the ones that could become helpless. That makes sense. We could train somebody to be helpless. But what about these animals that don't?" So through his research, he kept looking at this and looking at this and looking at people and working with them, and he landed on these two ways of explaining some of what's occurring.

One is through the way people explain events and talk to themselves either in an optimistic way or a pessimistic way. We're talking more about events we might see as "bad." One of the things they found through his research was that optimists see bad events, things that might not have gone so well, as very local, meaning not part of themselves. They don't blame themselves for it as much.

So if I don't do as well on one of my papers I've written as I thought I should, I tend to look at it more of, "Oh, well, maybe I was more tired. I had had a very busy week." It's impermanent. It's a moment in time, and it's non-pervasive. It's not going to take over everything in my life. Pessimists see it as opposite. I got really interested in this when I was thinking about stress and how these explanatory styles actually can contribute to our stress levels.

Katie: Yes, I love that. I was just thinking about one of the most difficult things for clients I've worked with over the years is not to take things personally, because it does look like it's about

them. One of the explanations is that anybody who was born into this family at the same time as you would have had the same experience. It's not personal to you.

It doesn't mean there's something wrong with you. It just means you ended up in this place at this time and had this experience, but anybody else who did would have had the same experience. The inability to see that, "Oh, this isn't personal; this doesn't have something to do with me," is one of the key things the pessimistic explanatory style really needs to learn.

I was just thinking of one of my friends, who when something would go wrong would say, "What can you do?" She would have her arms in that kind of openhanded shrug. Her shoulders would come up. "What can you do?" It was that kind of, "This sort of thing happens over and over again. It always happens. Things are always going to go wrong." There's some research that part of that is hereditary but that it's a learned style.

Daphne: I love that you just brought up the hereditary part of it. It becomes a habit. Just because it's hereditary doesn't mean you can't change it.

Katie: Right. Thank goodness.

Daphne: Yeah, thank goodness. I have very dark hair, but it's gray. You would never know it, right?

Katie: No, never know it.

Daphne: It's fun to put it in that context, because I think one of the ways we've used this idea of hereditary, you know, "It's hereditary," or whatever, is sort of like, "Well, there's nothing I can do about it." Absolutely not true in most instances, especially in this one.

Katie: In fact, that's a very, very important part of the kind of research and new styles of learning and evolving that are making their way through all levels of society now, everywhere from epigenetics to business meetings. So I think it's really valuable to take a look at, "What is actually going on, and what can I do about it? How can I influence it or change it? What will really make a difference?"

Daphne: I know you're working a lot with the emotion of fear, and this fits in a lot with this idea of learned helplessness. The idea behind learned helplessness is that there's nothing we can do. Our efforts are futile, so we might as well just not try. We can all have moments of that. I certainly have them. As a human on the planet, we have those moments, which puts us in our victim position. We can all experience that, but I wanted you to bring in some of the idea behind fear too, Katie.

Katie: Sure, I'd love to do that. One of the things I was thinking earlier is we could look at chronic long-term stress as low-level fear, that we're always inoculating ourselves with, "Oh dear," and it's going on at that subconscious level all the time. One of the things we've learned from very early pre- and perinatal research about what actually happens to fetuses in the womb and young babies...

There is what's called the *startle response*. If there is some kind of a stressor (for example, the mother smoking), the fetus goes through a startle, a freeze, a thrashing, and then a give-up cycle. It's a very predictable cycle. My sense is that a lot of what we're calling learned helplessness is the end result of being in a situation that you could not affect over time and that your body learns a pattern of response that is the startle/give-up response that then becomes habituated. It seems like there's nothing you can do about it, but you've actually learned to respond in that way.

Daphne: And thus the name *learned helplessness*. He used it in his studies more because they were teaching these animals to have to live with these shocks, so to speak, that through the experiment they learned it, but I think that's fascinating.

Katie: There are so many different situations we encounter, particularly in our heaviest learning years, which is before we actually get into school, about "There's no way I can win here," or "I either have to give in to my parents or I'm not going to get fed," or "If I don't shut up, I'll have to go to my room," and these various ways that over time people learn to put their innovation and their responsiveness into a very small box to survive.

Daphne: I think that's a really good point. Some of those strategies are not used out of wisdom.

Katie: No, and they were used because we needed to do that. I had to do that. I learned how not to let people know how smart I was, because it would make my mother very, very uncomfortable and angry at me, so I just got really quiet for a long time.

Daphne: We all have some version of that, right?

Katie: Yeah, I think we all have some version of that. The learned helplessness in a way implies that there's something wrong with you for being helpless. The worst thing is that then you can't do anything about it. I think what we're finding, particularly in recent years, is that there's no part of ourselves or any part of our patterning that cannot be changed.

Daphne: I want to bring this in, because this is a critical point. You've been in this world for a really long time. I'm just playing catch-up. I think one of the most critical points about that, that it *is* something you change... For a long time it was sort of the Freudian belief that you were at the effect of your behaviors and there was really nothing you could do.

Katie: Right, your internal drive.

Daphne: Your internal drive, and everybody had an Oedipus complex. You just had all of these problems. But it has been in about the past 25 years or so in the world of psychology that the cognitive folks came around and said, "Hey, guess what? That's actually not true. People *can* change their thinking. People *can* be self-aware, and we're going to show you that they can." So Freud kind of got... You know, "Bye, Freud." They kind of kicked out his ideas.

Katie: We still pull him out with some nostalgia and still talk about Freudian slips, but there are many researchers now who have not only brought in that you can choose the way you think, but

you can also change the way you act, the way you interact, and your relationship with your whole body-mind.

Daphne: That's really what we're talking about. That's what we're really pointing to.

Katie: It's the simplest, most effective, and most fun way to evolve.

Daphne: Yes, it is. I want to go back to a little bit about the pessimism/optimism. Let's talk about what the research really does show. First of all, one of the points we've made... One of the big questions is, "Okay, but what if I am a natural pessimist? Can I change it?" Here's what I want to tell everybody who's listening: Yeah, you can.

Katie: Yeah, you can, if you're scared that you can't, and if you're pessimistic about your ability to change.

Daphne: That was a nice arc. Well done, my friend. So even if you're pessimistic about your ability to change that. Here are some other things they've shown in the research. Pessimists, because they have this pervasive way... It's permanent, and the big words are *always* and *never*. It can even show up a little in language. Pessimists give up more easily. They get depressed more often, whereas optimists tend to do better. They do better in life. They're a little bit more successful.

So after they looked at all this, the question became... *Could this be taught?* Could you learn to become more optimistic if you were naturally prone to pessimism? Guess what? Yeah, you can. So good news for that. I think how this relates back to stress, Katie, is how we perceive the events in our lives, how we choose to see them or not, is really a key point that I think drives a lot of stress.

Katie: Yes, and don't you think it's about kind of an ongoing internal critic and judger who's evaluating against an impossible standard?

Daphne: Yeah, I do think that's true. I think that's what happens. The criticizer comes in. "You should have done better. Man, you'd better be careful. You're going to lose this, that, or the other."

Katie: "You're going to lose out entirely. If you don't stop doing that, it's going to get even worse."

Daphne: That's why I was also enticed about the fear part of that. It's this judger, criticizer, fear-based voice that just over time is not helpful.

Katie: It isn't helpful, and I think it also becomes kind of invisible. We think it's real rather than something we just thought over and over and over so long it seems like it's inevitable. We forget we're thinking the thoughts we choose to think.

Daphne: "It's just happening." When they come up, you can literally change your mind.

Katie: You can literally change your mind, and just to bring that back to breathing, one of the best ways to do that is to slow your breathing, because stress is almost always accompanied by breathing that makes you anxious. If you're breathing more than 12 breaths a minute, you're going to get anxious, which is going to contribute to stress.

If you slow your breathing down, one of the really important things that happens is you turn off your anxiety mechanisms, your own internal anxiety hormones, and those are internal stressors. I've seen hundreds of times with people starting with something they're concerned or stressed about and noticing their breathing, and then deliberately shifting their breathing to slow and easy and connected, and some of them even forget what it was they were thinking about.

Daphne: Yeah, I think this is a key point, Katie, because one of the big arguments is, "Do our thoughts create our body sensations?" I think that's a very interesting argument or conversation. I think more importantly, connect with your body, because it does become a loop. Like it or not, I think it becomes one big loop. I have a thought and create my own stress, and then I can use the body, which is a very fast mechanism, through breathing, which you just gave a wonderful example of, to actually start shifting the chemistry, which can actually shift our thinking. I think that's a really key point.

Katie: It's really a key point, and I think people don't often go through that doorway. They try to change their thoughts by thinking. Just like with anything, you want to erase the board sometimes so you can put some new thoughts in there. The best way to erase the board is to do something in your body, and then you get a clean screen in your mind where you can create the kinds of thoughts that are going to support you thriving rather than stressing.

Daphne: Rather than stressing yourself out. I *am* going to give some mind things today, though.

Katie: Okay, I think as long as we all keep breathing, we can receive those.

Daphne: Great. Now you might have a question, for our friends out there listening. "Am I an optimist? Am I a pessimist?" Well, I want to turn you on to something. You can go to the Authentic Happiness website, www.authentichappiness.com. This is the UPenn site where they have all of these amazing questionnaires and things you can take.

You can get on there, and under the questionnaire link they have an optimism scale. It's really cool. I was surprised, Katie. I think they looked at four quadrants, but there was one... I have a tendency to see things a little bit as permanent, and I would not have expected that. You know, my score was average.

Katie: Well, well, well.

Daphne: Isn't that interesting?

Katie: That is really interesting. It's so great to have these kinds of measures, because our own self-evaluation is not always entirely accurate.

Daphne: Oh, you're kidding. Really?

Katie: Sorry about that.

Daphne: I'm just an optimist. I think it's the nuances we can play with. I took it months and months ago, and I thought, "Oh, do I really do that?" Then I started really noticing how I was approaching some of the problems or challenges I would come up with or ways I was stressing myself out, and I'd be like, "Oh yeah, right. I see this as lasting forever. I can have that tendency." I didn't know that prior to that. Again, it's a nuance I play with, but I would encourage everybody to go check it out. You can do it yourself and see where you land.

Katie: That's a really great idea, and that's at www.authentic happiness.com.

Daphne: Again, they have all kinds of validated surveys people can use for different things around there. It's really cool.

Katie: That's a great resource.

Daphne: Thank you. So I want to talk about this *ABCDE* process. Here's a process people can use. It's real simple, the *ABC* especially, which is about look at the *activating event* you feel has caused your stress, that's stressing you out.

Katie: That's what we call, "What happened?"

Daphne: Right. What happened?

Katie: Just translating for everyday people.

Daphne: Thank you. So the activating event, also known as what happened. Simple. Then look at the *beliefs* you're creating around that.

Katie: This is so cool. I call that, "What's the story you made up about what happened?"

Daphne: Okay, good. So what happened? What's the story you've made up, the belief? Then notice the *consequences* of that belief, of the story.

Katie: We would call that the result.

Daphne: So what happened? What's the event? What's the story you've made up about the event? Then what's the result of the story? Not the result of the event. By the way, Katie, this is one of the places where people get a little confused about this sometimes. It's not the event. It's the consequence or the result of the story you're making up.

Katie: Or the belief. The story is almost always about a belief, but sometimes people can't get right to the belief because they're wrapped up in the story. So I like to have people identify the

activating event. What happened? You made up something about that, you created a story, so what story? Then that can sometimes help people to see the belief.

The belief is, "I can't do anything right" or "Nobody likes me" or whatever the belief is, and then the result would be that everybody went away from you at the party. The result looks like it belongs to the actual event. Sorting out that it has to do with your belief or the story you made up... That's something that in my advanced courses we take two years.

Daphne: Good point. This is something that takes practice. Another thing I want to say is that a lot of times I think we feel like we should just change.

Katie: "Come on! Get over it."

Daphne: There's just no substitute for intentional practice.

Katie: Just like if you wanted to learn anything new, a new sport or a new instrument or a new language, you practice. You're kind of awkward and not so skillful at it at first, but you keep it up.

Daphne: Right. Okay, here's the other piece of this. This is the *D* part of this.

Katie: Yeah, what the heck is that *D* part?

Daphne: The *D* part is what they call *disputation*, so disputing.

Katie: Oh, I love it, *disputation*.

Daphne: Here's why I love it. I don't know about you, Katie...

Katie: I can put that to rhythm there. *Disputation*. That's a rap song all in itself.

Daphne: I don't know about you, but I can argue with the best of them.

Katie: I believe that about you.

Daphne: Thanks. So here's where you get to use it. For all of you out there who know you can argue against another person, you get to actually use this incredible skill to argue against your own story.

Katie: Whoa!

Daphne: To actually disprove or dispute the story you're making up about the activating event.

Katie: I love that.

Daphne: Isn't that clever?

Katie: Just believing that that's the way it is, you go, "Wait a minute."

Daphne: Exactly. "Wait a minute."

Katie: Yeah, the whole, "Wait a minute. Hey, you weren't the only person who was late."

Daphne: "Wait a minute. I'm not the only person who's not in that meeting." What I call it is finding the rest of the evidence.

Katie: Yes, finding the rest of the evidence, being your own Sherlock.

Daphne: Be your own Sherlock. We use these amazing skills we have to dispute our own story, our own belief. That's the *ABCDE*. The *E* is just energizing, so finding out how you shift.

Katie: Which I would think is a very important part of the process. I love it that we're also giving our minds something else to do that is really useful to shift stress into flow.

Daphne: Yes, that is really what it's doing. I like that. Going from a stressful moment into flow. You brought up something too, Katie. I think this is the other way this model works so well. It's the big part of your work, which is around shifting from blaming, which I think is pessimistic.

Katie: I do too. "There I go again."

Daphne: Blaming yourself is what we're really talking about too, but actually being able to go... When we move more to that optimistic explanatory style, I think that's where we have the opportunity to shift to 100-percent responsibility.

Katie: I think the key move there and one, again, which does require practice to actually get embodied, but you can learn it right away, is thinking, "Oh, wait a minute. I've been doing something to create this. This isn't happening *to* me. I am participating with this. I'm an actor in this process. I have made choices. Oh, I see where these choices have led me. Hmm, what would it be like if I started making some different choices? Instead of arguing with my partner all the time, what if I took a moment to take a breath and see if I could summarize *their* point of view effectively instead of always barging in with mine? Hmm, maybe that would create a..."

The key move there is seeing that I am creating what's happening to me. I'm not creating *all* of what is happening to me, because there are things that are outside of my control, but there are definitely choices I'm making moment to moment that are really helping to create the situation and can also change the situation.

Daphne: One of those choices is, "What are you thinking?"

Katie: What are you thinking right now? Not like, "What were you thinking?"

Daphne: No, not like that, but literally.

Katie: What are you actually thinking? Where are you putting your attention right now? What are you recirculating through your mind? Is there anything familiar about that? Then you can actually start to learn rather than to repeat.

Daphne: Oh yes. This is a point you've made several times on the show about pattern interrupt. I liked what you were saying earlier about the body, because I think the body and the breathing... You know, the *ABCDE* exercise is very valuable, incorporating that with some breathing and some movement. Now you really have a nice pattern interrupt for stress.

Katie: And a simple one, and one you can remember, that you can use quickly in any situation. It's not complicated. It doesn't require a lot of props.

Daphne: No. You can do it in your pajamas in your own house.

Katie: Exactly.

Daphne: I've done it. I know. It works. I've done it before in my pajamas.

Katie: Especially in your pajamas. I like to say that it's a "come as you are" party and that if you are welcoming yourself... "Okay, here I am, and what could I learn here?" The key shift for me is, "Can I get curious about what I'm thinking and what I'm doing?" For me, curiosity is the bridge between pessimism to optimism.

Daphne: Yes, very nice. Well, I think we've covered the invitations to mastery. Shall we make them a little bit more salient?

Katie: I think we've got them, it seems to me. How I summarize this in my seminars is to say, "Notice the drift, and make the shift."

Daphne: Notice the drift, and make the shift. Notice the drift into pessimistic thinking, and make the shift.

Katie: Make the shift, and especially just do something simple in your body, slow your breathing, change your posture. Then notice what you're thinking. When you apply some curiosity to it, you'll really unlock that pessimistic viewpoint, and you'll really open the windows.

Daphne: Again, that was like your fifth metaphor this show.

Katie: Thank you. I'm writing a book right now.

Daphne: I love it. We're going to close the window on this episode. We're going to wrap it up. We hope you enjoyed this podcast. Now you're really inspired. I can feel it. And you have several strategies to manage anything that's coming through your mind, anything you think is a stressful event in your life. Now you have it. You've heard it right here, folks.

If you dig this show, support us with some more ratings on iTunes. Thanks so much for the people who have. Share your comments with us at www.daphne-scott.com. And keep living a super fantastic leadership life.