



Article by: Patty Oji February 26, 2020

Toxic Stress: There's an upgrade for that!

I'm standing in the mirror just thinking, looking at myself and wondering “**How the heck did I get shingles in my 30's?!** Shingles? I never knew I had chickenpox. How could this be happening? I've also gained 40 pounds over the last year, of which probably a healthy 20 plus pounds came on in the last few months. What is going on here??!!”

I was working on a high stakes project for a very large client.

I take my work seriously (read: too seriously) as a partner and an ally. When I'm all in, I am ALL in.... I was working 24/7. I pushed through the shingles pain that I discounted, fatigue, upset stomach, lack of movement and the fear.....

“What would happen if things went wrong?”

I thought about what would it mean for the client, for our community and our stakeholders.... What did it mean about me if we (read: I) failed...

I could just imagine my kids shuddering when I walked in the house, half-dead and growling each night. At the end of that project the results were great, for the client - for the project. Wonderful... And there I was.

As I looked back, I wondered, “Is it me? Am I just weak?”

Am I just a person that is not managing stress the right way? The stress felt real... Am I nuts? Other professionals go through extremely high stakes situations. I'm sure there are better ways to deal with this.... What's wrong with me? “

What I now know is that It's about our inner operating system as much, or if not more, than it is about the environment, the context that we live in.

It's primarily about how we interpret what is happening to us. Our inner operating system (ios) includes our mind, values, thoughts, beliefs, triggers, identity, etc. The more advanced our ios, the better we can handle and even leverage stress and challenge. That's why we see such a difference with how “high-performance” individuals or “zen” individuals can manage the seemingly overwhelming amounts of stress in healthy and productive ways.

Design dictates performance.

I have a Honda Odyssey minivan that I LOVE! My Honda Odyssey will not perform the same as a sports car. It can't go nearly as fast. It refuses to take corners like a boss. It's not designed to do that. My Honda is designed to accommodate seven passengers and a ton of groceries and soccer balls. It's a great family vehicle but I will not be running the Indy 500 in it and even if I did, there's no way it could even keep up in that race! The same is true with our internal operating rating system.

Our internal structures determine how we process and work with our environment, both good and bad.

The good news here is that we can upgrade our internal operating system! The beauty of the human mind is that we can continue to grow if we **choose** to do so!

So, let's invest in upgrading our ios because it's the one thing that we have the most control over. While we certainly can and should make changes to our external environments, the truth is that most of what's happening in the external environment is outside of our control.

We are living in a volatile and complex system where there is no formula for how things will happen or exactly how to solve challenges.

We know that disruption is happening more and more frequently on all levels: political, environmental, medical, social, technological, regulatory... Change is the new norm. The primary work is to develop our ios to match and exceed the growing demands of our work and our lives.

While there are many worthy self-help tips, **the best way I know to upgrade our ios is to partner with a skilled professional coach.** It has worked for me and is a part of how I support my clients towards *Healthy* high-performance.

About:

Alpha is a leadership development and strategic management consulting company focused on serving values-based organizations. We are dedicated to the essential work of leveraging and up-leveling the human side of work and believe that people work is the “true heart and art of work”.

Our mission is to act as a strategic partner supporting our clients to bring their vision to life. We leverage over 20 years of expertise to assist clients in achieving healthy high-performance through leadership development, team development and effective management systems. Alpha employs a suite of strategic and transformational programs delivered through a cadre of highly qualified and ethical associates focused on knowing and supporting the client’s immediate needs and long-term success.

Patty Oji is a solutions driven leader committed to building and enhancing discerning and courageous leadership necessary to achieve transformation and impact for individuals and organizations. Patty leverages 20 years of multifaceted experience managing high-level projects and initiatives for national and local clients to guide strategy and planning, organizational sustainability, talent development, new ventures, and more. Through Alpha, she offers trusted coaching and consulting to values-based businesses, which include corporations, government and social impact organizations.

As a dynamic executive coach - with an innate aptitude for listening - she is known for bridging cultures, motivating client performance and developing leadership competencies. She has a strong and proven track record of employing her significant training and education in human/organizational development to galvanize and elevate client performance and outcomes.

Integrity, growth, conscious leadership and values-aligned accountability are hallmarks of her leadership and professionalism. Her clients describe her as a trusted advisor, highly qualified and capable, passionate, a collaborator, committed and knowledgeable.

Patty's credentials include a Bachelor's of Arts (Linguistics, Cross-Cultural Communication and Spanish), Master's Degree in Public Administration, Certified Professional CoActive Coach, International Coach Federation ACC Credential, Certified Practitioner of the Leadership Circle Profile and the Leadership Culture Survey, Organizational and Relationship Systems Coach, training in the Art of Developmental Coaching, Leapers certified by CRR Global, Executive Coach training by the Coaching and Positive Psychology Institute, and native fluency in Spanish.