

# STRESS

Spring 2005 Edition ©

## Getting The Finger

Many of my most FAVORITE people have seen me use THE FINGER (no, not *that* finger). “The finger” can be a digital expression, a meaningful look, or a verbal communication. We all know the result of getting the finger – it causes us FEAR. It’s that little inner voice that says “*now what did I do*”?

Getting the finger creates a FIGHT, FLIGHT, or FREEZE reaction in us. This instinct is as sure as our reaction to the gleam of a tiger’s eye, or the rattle of a snake’s tail. While our response to the finger is not generally that drastic - one can still feel their stomach tighten, heart rate speed up, and brain race to figure out what is coming next.

The finger is a form of conditional pre-attack. In our culture the finger precedes the information we want to communicate. However, fingered people tend to get instantly defensive. Some people may get an attitude, or behave in a hostile manner, even before they know what the issue is. They will be the first to give you the finger back (*even the middle one*), most likely by arguing. Other people may retreat, already sensitive to a perceived criticism about to come their way, trying to avoid being a target. Other defenses include denial or shifting blame.

Using the finger (even innocently) is one way to stop open and healthy communication. We all do it. The most common use of “the finger” is in the form of the word “**you**”. This verbal finger sounds like “you should...”, “it’s your fault”, or “why don’t you...” If you’re feeling defensive – you’ve probably gotten the finger. Let me know if you’d like to learn more about eliminating the finger! Of course, the finger is still very useful for - - -

giving directions, compliments, or testing the wind. 😊

## Medication Information

Did you know that medication theft is on the rise? Be suspicious if a house guest inspects your bathroom cabinet for no reason, or if a prescription is missing. **All** prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, and vitamins should be put where no child, animal, or visitor can have access to them without your presence (some can be lethal).

## News & Activities

Nancy recently went to visit the YOUTH IMPACT program in Ogden, with the new chief administrative officer Marcia Knorr as her guide. This is an inner city outreach program that provides after school and Summer activities for children 10 to 18 years old. She had great fun meeting some of the program youth and checking out handshake styles. What’s your style? Marsha had some great variations! A good hand shake has full contact (your thumb as close to their wrist as possible) with a firm but gentle squeeze, lasting one to three seconds.

A recent lecture on identity theft pointed out the importance of not leaving your payments out waiting for pickup. Do as Nancy does and always use a blue drop box or take your mail in to the local U. S. Post Office.

## A Hug-A-Day Isn’t Enough

Your child needs loving, physical contact with you to be healthy. Welcome touch boosts the immune system, calms us down, and helps us focus. Try to connect with your little loved one(s) many times a day. Pinching, poking, pulling, and pushing don’t count! Give hugs, snuggle, rub feet or shoulders, touch when talking, do high fives, and caress as often as you can. Loving touch is a gift that returns to us.

## Signs of Depression

Depression appears in different forms for each individual. One person may be lethargic, another tearful, or someone else irritable. Some people may have increased sleep or appetite; others may have insomnia or not want to eat. Anxiety, headaches, and/or forgetfulness can be a part of the symptoms. Depression has varying degrees of severity and can be present with other disorders. Some surgeries, medications, or medical problems can cause depression. Alcohol or drug abuse can trigger or mask it.

There are different patterns to depression. It could be a single episode, seasonal, hormonal, situational, recurrent, unpredictable, or just seem ongoing. Sometimes depression develops slowly, but it can also appear suddenly. Susceptibility can be genetic in some families. Children may act out more than usual, or behave younger than their age when depressed. An elderly person may have personality changes with depression. Some women develop depression after childbirth. A man may withdraw more – so you just don’t know what is going on.

Scientists know that a chemical imbalance is involved, and there are actual brain changes, during depression. We don’t know which happens first, or why. **It is not a choice to be depressed!** Depression is no more wanted than diabetes or heart disease. Positive thinking, improved self-care, exercise, getting outdoor light, and stress management are some of the things we can choose to do to feel better. Counseling can help us learn new coping tools, generate new ways of thinking about things, and develop healthy habit skills. Medication is a last resort treatment for depression and should always include counseling. Suicidal thoughts should always be taken seriously. It’s important to know there is help available to resolve depression.

## Trivia

Did you know that the symbol “X” used for kiss (as in XOXO, AKA kisses and hugs) is called gyfu? This X is an ancient sign of mutual affection. Gyfu can symbolize a gift, the action of giving, the process of exchange, balance, or an action that returns to you (as in the benefits of kindness). Other variations include a partnership or union in business or love.

X is also the Greek letter chi, which is how we derive the symbol for Christ (X is the initial for Christos) in Xmas. Xn is actually an abbreviation for Christian.

X is often used for an unknown quantity or calculation in math, a horizontal axis, a form of energy, a spot marker, a signature substitute, to multiply, the number ten, to cross or a cross, the prefix trans (like xport for transport), a rating, extra, ex, experimental, by, intersection, & more!