

Combatting stress

What stresses me out the most? Is it a corrupted file, banked up traffic, or might it be we made a decision that's ended in our having over-committed ourselves?

Whatever is causing us to feel under pressure, the Latin word for stress means "to be drawn tight." Because we have such a strong body/soul/spirit connection, the stress we feel is invariably felt in the body, e.g. splitting headache, knot in the stomach.

It makes sense therefore to address stress on all levels – physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually.

In a lot of ways, we resemble a car. The mind represents the ignition, the nervous system the battery, the body the motor.

Don Oliver, Commonwealth Games weightlifting gold medalist, used to say the biggest disease in the world is over-ignition. This is when the priorities taking up the focus of our minds are interrupted by *priority interruptions*. We begin to feel the "drawing tight." A quick succession of emergencies without let-up will do that to us.

We all need something to stretch us physically or mentally, to help grow our potential. This is positive stress but if we become over-extended, we slip into dis-tress. Too many changes, sudden change, feeling over-responsible, little reserves are all part of the climate that brings about negative stress.

Tips to help us prepare for negative stress before it comes

- 1) We all have an emotional wellbeing bank account
 - Feed and replenish your spirit regularly. Build the resources in your bank account so it is in good shape for when you need to make a major withdrawal.
 - Think about what feeds your spirit. It may be regular walks or runs in a favorite slice of God's creation. It may be good music. Perhaps it's Sunday worship.
 - Make a point of regular, relaxing holidays or taking little Sabbath-breaks in the course of your year.
- 2) Ask yourself, when is the last time I spent ½ hour doing something I enjoy, just for me? This is part of God's gift of rest He has for you to enjoy.
- 3) Look after yourself physically and mentally as the regular habit of your life. Stressful events can be unpredictable and none of us know when the next event will come, or where it will come from.
- 4) Speak positively to yourself and others around you, so that we can all build each other up.
- 5) Develop your ability to receive from others. You cannot keep giving out from a dry well. Develop your own network of beautiful, supportive people.

After stress has landed

- 1) Adopt new attitudes. Imagine you have a six hour delay at the airport. In the past you would be overwrought but choose to say, "Terrific! Six hours to relax and read a book."

- 2) Parents, choose your battles. Don't fight your children on every little issue, or you'll wear yourself out. There'll be no energy left for the important battles.
- 3) If a new commitment has been foisted on you, and is overstretching you, consider your options – build up your resources – develop new skills if it takes you out of your comfort zone – step out in faith – readjust the goal - or drop the commitment. None are wrong. Do what is right for you.
- 4) The Gospels never paint a picture of a hurried, striving Jesus. If you are feeling over-burdened, if it's not feeling light, then it's probably not from Him. "My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Mt.11.30).
- 5) Consider this acrostic to take you through the day.

TRUST: T – Tell God
R – Run to God
U – Unload on God
S – Sit with God
T – Talk with God

Ps.46.10 "Be still and know that I am God"
Become "loose again" and free in the presence of our God

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