

Stress - Turn it into Success

A "friend" bills you for considerably more than his original quote. A family member takes seriously ill and is hospitalized for months. Responsibilities and expenses soar. At the same time you're responsible for a half-million dollar building program and your loan falls through. The result? Stress! I know because these things all happened to me in the course of a recent year.

Stress is a normal part of modern living. We all have our share. Ignore it and it will take years off your life. Accept it and deal with it creatively and you, too, can turn your stress into success. How can you do this?

- 1.** The starting point to turn stress into success is to lessen your load. Eighty percent of the cure can come out of writing down all your cares and responsibilities in order of priority, then eliminating the least important. If you're going to add something to your list of responsibilities, it is wise to then eliminate something from the list to prevent overload. You might find that some of the items on your list just aren't worth the stress!
- 2.** Remember that Superman and Superwoman exist only in comic books and movies. Everybody has a breaking point, so recognize yours and call a halt before you reach your limit.
- 3.** With stress comes pent-up feelings. Try and confide in a trusted friend or counselor. At first it might seem impossible, but verbalizing your feelings brings immediate relief and helps you to think and plan more objectively.
- 4.** Are you fighting against things you can't change? Stop. You can't change whatever it is, but you can change the time and energy you put into stressing about it. As one father told his impatient teenager, "If you would only realize and accept the fact that life is a struggle, things would be so much easier for you." Learning to live with and get on top of struggles is what helps us grow and mature.
- 5.** Try to avoid making too many major life changes during the course of a single year. Most readers are familiar with Thomas H. Holmes' research on stress. He found that too much change at one time was the greatest cause of stress. An accumulation of 300 or more "life changing units" in any one year may mean an overload of more stress than an individual can carry. On his scale, death of a spouse equals 100 units, divorce 73, marital separation 65, marriage 50 and so on. All of us experience relational stress periodically throughout our lives. And if its not our relationships racking up points, then it's one of the other major life categories like work, environment, or even ourselves amassing points, building stress into our lives.
- 6.** If you hold a resentment towards another person, resolve your difference right away. Never "let the sun go down with you still angry" (Ephesians 2:26, TLB).
- 7.** Make time for rest and relaxation. Learn to rest before you come apart.
- 8.** Watch your diet and eating habits, When under stress we trend to overeat--especially junk food which increases stress. Eat a balanced diet of proteins, vitamins, and lots of fiber. And to help lower the effects of stress, eliminate white sugar, caffeine, too much fat, alcohol and nicotine in your diet.



9. Be sure to get plenty of physical exercise. This keeps you healthier and helps burn up excess adrenaline caused by stress and its partner anxiety.

10. We find the greatest comfort and relief for eliminating stress in the New Testament. Imagine if someone told us not to worry because they would take care of everything even those things that seem overwhelming? Philippians 4:6-7 tells us to do just that; "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs and don't forget to thank him for his answers. If you do this you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand." It might seem too impossible for the human mind to understand altogether - and that's where the heart takes over.