

# Help I'm Stressed out....

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How many times have you been at the end of your rope? Thought you could not take another thing- and felt like life was crashing in on you? I recently ran into a lady that I met when I moved to Charlotte about 10 years ago. She is a business owner, a wife, a mother, and is very active in her church. She immediately in our conversation began to tell me how busy she was. It was almost as if she thought her going over every detail of her busy lifestyle would validate her existence in my eyes. Some people really fell like their business is a sign of success.

I remember an interview I saw recently with a pastor that has over 10,000 in his church. The person interviewing him and his wife- started out by saying- Wow you all must be really busy. The Pastor said- No- we are not- we plan times of stopping in our life. Time to rest, and enjoy each day. Wow- I guess his response shocked me and caused me to think about the "busy-ness factor" in my own life.

Our society today is in a painful, contagious, socially transmitted condition of overload, debt, anxiety, and waste -all based on our pursuit of more. One of my friends and her husband has four children and live in a 5000 square foot house. The ironic thing is they both work 40-60 hours per week to pay for their home, for the private schools, and for the after-school- care to watch their children while they work. They come home to see their children for 2 hours, put them to bed, clean up their 5000 square foot house and get up in the morning to do it all over again. I think of their sweet children who would probably love for their parents to get off of their hamster wheel of life and just spend some quality time with them.

My natural tendency is to be a work-a-holic. This is made painfully aware to me as I am typing this on a Sunday night- an off night- as I am trying to catch up on the MK E-votionals for the 18 and older age bracket. Instead of taking a night OFF – I am driven to get another job done. For my credit I did play "Trouble" with Seanna, and "Lincoln Logs" with Emma this evening.

So in thinking about Stress- and how I handle it- I have a LONG WAY to go to be better at handling it. Do I have my act together? No. Do I have some things that help me now? Yes. Here are some of them. They are simple –but are things that are my stress reducers:

1. Plan out your prayer time daily and stick to it- if you put God/Prayer/Devotion time first- your day will be built on the right foundation. Your life can only grow based on the foundation of prayer that you build it on. The higher your goals, the broader base of prayer you will need. If you feel like you are not reaching your dreams in Christ- maybe you need to examine the platform of prayer in your life.
2. Use a daily organizer/calendar/managing system to put key dates, appointments, birthdays, anniversaries, special prayer needs on it. I put my things to do list here, deadlines that I make for

myself. I will even let you in on a secret. Sometimes I put things on my to-do list that I have already done so that I can cross off something quickly. I know – silly.

3. Throw away junk mail daily. I HATE CLUTTER. It is amazing how much junk mail, catalogs, papers that we take into our homes daily. Put them in your recycle bin as soon as you get them. It is amazing how they will reproduce when they arrive in your house- and then take over.
4. Organize your kitchen. How much time have you spent searching for kitchen tools or items in your pantry when you are going to cook? I remember one time while making mashed potatoes I searched for 20 minutes for my potato masher. I ended up using the cabbage chopper (if that is the right name for it). I later found that my little seven year old helper had used it for her play-dough. That was my day of reckoning with my kitchen. Now everything has a place.
5. Screen your calls. You do not have to answer every telemarketer, every political call, every sales call. You also do not have to come to your door when the vacuum salesperson is knocking.
6. Make the most of your waiting times. I keep note cards and a book in my purse. That way when I am stuck in line somewhere I can get something done. If you have ever gotten a card from me- it just might have been written in the grocery store line.
7. Limit the time that you spend with negative and pessimistic people. Just say no to drainers and the Debbie Downers in your life. You know the type that I am talking about. The kind that when they walk in- it seems like the lights just went out. I used to work with a person like this. I finally started answering her negativity with positive comments and she did not seek me out anymore. I find that if you have a negative caller you can also stop them in their tracks by saying- thanks for bringing that up- why don't we stop and pray for \_\_\_\_\_ right now. They usually quit calling.
8. Make a to-do list every night before you go to bed. This takes the pressure of forgetting off of your mind. I also try to keep a pad of paper and pen in the top drawer by my bed. You will be amazed the thoughts, ministry ideas that I wake up with at 4 AM 😊.

9. Find your “out” - and do it often. Find something in your life that is a stress-releaser for you. Some people like to jog, some people read, some people scrap-book, some people shop (I don't recommend this), some people sew, some people knit, some people text, and the list goes on and on. What do you enjoy doing? What have you always wanted to do- but you put off. This is a work in progress for me. I need to find my out. I love to read and need to- stop and read something enjoyable for ME and not work related.
  
10. Finally- make laughing and fun a priority daily. Did you know that laughing actually releases endorphins in your body that take away pain? That smiling is a natural face lift? Find some fun people and cling to them. If you have found someone that your sense of humor clicks with- cultivate that friendship. Let them know that they are essential in your life. Most of my closest fun friends live in the four corners of the earth- literally. To have “fun” with them I have to be creative. Send fun emails, have a random text day, email funny pictures, remind them of fun times you have spent together. Let the people in your life know that they matter and they are a vital part of your life. Life is short. Enjoy It!

Lastly I will tell you to live life large. I had dinner with a close friend of mine in the end of May. There were eight of us at that meal. We were in one of the nicest steakhouses in the area. I remember as my friend perused the menu she really wanted a succulent steak but thought of her waistline and hastily ordered a caesar salad. She unexpectedly died in a tragic accident 2 months later. While going through the grieving process my mind went back to that night. She should have had the steak. Life is short! Don't let the little things become so huge in your mind that they are bogging you down. Put Jesus first and he will enable you to use your time and energy in wise ways so that you can do all that you need to do!