

STRESS REDUCTION ACTIVITIES & TECHNIQUES

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Following are only a sample of the many stress reduction activities and techniques that can be incorporated into your daily life to help you to maintain a healthy balance.

Humor

Laughter is like medicine and smiles keep you from being overtaken by seriousness or sadness. Studies show that laughter lowers blood pressure, exercises the lungs, increases oxygen in the bloodstream and stimulates the production of the brain chemical that is known as the brain's built-in painkiller (endorphins). (Erickson, 1995)

If you find it difficult to find humor in your everyday lifestyle, try reading a joke book or the comic strips, view a comical movie or take yourself out to a card store and read the humorous greeting cards.

Spiritual Disciplines*

Incorporate spiritual disciplines into your daily lifestyle. Some spiritual disciplines are:

- Reading The Bible-having a daily devotions or reading an inspirational article or book
- Singing songs of praise and worship to God
- Meditating on Scripture
- Prayer for self and especially for others
- Being quick to forgive or repent
- Solitude or silence
- Journal writing
- Listening to uplifting music or a sermon
- Fellowship with other Christians

*For more detailed information on Spiritual Disciplines, go to a Christian bookstore or do an Internet bookstore search to locate a book that covers this subject.

Life Management

- Take control over those things that you have the power to control, such as, your time and your activities.

- Utilize a schedule/appointment tool and be careful of scheduling too many activities or events in one day or week.
- Space your activities to make up for the unexpected. If you arrive early, you can use that time to de-stress.
- Don't forget to include everyday responsibilities like cooking, cleaning, shopping, picking up family members, etc. into your daily and weekly scheduling.
- Do not be afraid to say "no" or make mid stream changes when commitments are piling up on you.
- Make sure that you get the number of hours of sleep necessary for you to be okay.
- Practice good eating habits remembering that what you eat eventually affects your attitude and emotional disposition.
- Make "DWJD (Do What Jesus Did)" a motto for decision making, relationship management, and life challenges.
- Take vitamins as a nutritional supplement. Vitamin B complex helps to balance the nervous system. Consider herbal teas or supplements to aid in good health.
- Rid yourself of the drama or the keeping up with the "Jones's."
- Periodically, think of ways to simplify your life, then implement them.

Miscellaneous Tips

- Treat yourself to a massage
- Go for a ride in the country
- Go on a date with a dear friend or loved one
- Do something fun that is out of the ordinary for you
- Encourage/help someone
- Rent a funny video
- Watch the sun rise or set
- Run from gossip or demeaning conversations
- Schedule do nothing time

- Go to a museum, zoo, an art show, a musical event
- Call a caring friend just to talk
- Pursue a hobby or a dream
- Avoid people who tend to put you down
- Be willing to try new (healthy) activities
- Train yourself to be positive, optimistic, confident in God and His Word
- Decrease cigarette smoking, drug dependency, alcoholic beverages with a goal to quit completely

Techniques

1. Deep Breathing - Slowly inhale, at the count of 5. Then slowly exhale at the count of 5. Repeat until you feel your body relaxing.
2. Tensing & Relaxing - Systematically tense your muscles, hold for a count of ten, and then relax. A helpful strategy may be tensing and relaxing individual muscle groups at a time.
3. Positive Rephrase - Even though a situation may be very stressful or difficult to handle, find the positive and/or determine to learn a lesson from the situation to help in the future.
4. Avoidance - Be wise and avoid situations, people, activities, etc. that you know produces distress or "get to your nerves."
5. Scripture Cards - Write your favorite verses on 3x5 cards to carry around. Utilize them when your thoughts become negative or anxious, or when experiencing a conflict or stressful situation.
6. Speak the Truth in Love - Confront problems as they arise in a healthy manner with the goal of bringing resolve, avoiding hypocrisy, and maintaining good relationships.
7. Exercise - Incorporate some sort of physical activity into your week. Stretching daily helps to relieve the body of tension.
8. Positive Self-Talk - Remember, if you think or make negative remarks to or about yourself, you are telling others what to think of you and/or how to treat you. Be the first to encourage yourself and speak positively to yourself. Refrain from calling yourself, stupid, ugly, dumb, etc. when you make a mistake. Mistakes are normal to life, give yourself a break.

9. Venting - Remember the one or two people that care for you unconditionally or that you know you can trust to keep your information confidential. Honestly state what is bothering you. Talking it out tends to help "get the stuff" out of us that leads to distress. Then pray specifically over the "issues" that came out of your mouth, releasing them to God and allowing Him to provide the resolution for your concerns.
10. Decrease Worry - Matthew 6:25 tells us "Do not worry..." This is a command from our God who loves us deeply and wants what is best for us. Worry only serves to distract us from the plans and purposes of God and to hinder us from a life of peace and joy. When you begin to worry, quickly cast your concerns upon the Lord. Read and meditate on Philippians 4: 6-9.

Reading Resources

Frequently browse through a bookstore or the Internet for helpful books, articles, or tapes on stress management, time management, prayer and intercession, praise and worship, application of God's Word, hope, healing of emotions, or topics specific to your situation. God is always giving someone greater understanding about righteous living to help others in their Christian growth and lifestyle.

Relationship With Jesus Christ

If you haven't entered into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, read these verses and follow them:

"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." (NIV)

Romans 10: 9, 10

If you have slipped in your relationship with God and want to return to Him, read the following verse and follow it:

"Again and again I sent all my servants the prophets to you. They said, "Each of you must turn from your wicked ways and reform your actions; do not follow other gods to serve them. Then you will live in the land I have given to you and your fathers..." (NIV)

Jeremiah 35:15

Honestly repent of your sins (of doing things your way or the way of the world) and ask (allow) Jesus to take charge of your life. Locate a church in your area that is centered on Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, a church that teaches the Bible and has opportunity for relationship development with other Christians and/or provides classes that help you in your spiritual growth and development.