

Free Tips

The Meaning of Stress
and How to Live with Less of It



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by Julie Davis

1. **“Life is stressful.”** It seems that this is a common statement nowadays. We go about our daily activities accepting traffic, late appointments, long lines and noise as a part of life. Unfortunately, heart attacks, migraines, depression and addictions are also a part of life, and many research studies have concluded a link between stress and these physical ailments.
2. **God’s purpose for stress:** Stress was designed to keep us motivated. Before grocery stores, motels, and clothing outlets, stress from nature and physical needs kept us working fields and animals in the summer so that we would be clothed, fed and sheltered in the winter.
3. **Man’s abuse of stress:** Most of us do not have to worry about our next meal or clothes on our back, yet we are more stressed than ever. Modern society applies a lot of pressure to look, feel, think and behave certain ways. We strive to live longer, maintain beautiful bodies, drive faster cars, raise perfect children and manage successful careers and we stress ourselves out in the process.
4. **The cost:** There is nothing wrong with wanting a comfortable life; but at what cost? Every choice we make has an emotional, physical, spiritual price tag. We work long hours, take care of others, focus on what we don’t have; and the cost is neglect of God, family and our health.
5. **Reclaiming serenity:** God doesn’t want us to live all stressed out! We can’t do his work when we are tired, sick, depressed. So how can we reclaim God’s gift of peace and serenity? Here are some tips that may help. If you find yourself unable to de-stress on your own, if you can’t pull out of “the blues” or if you worry constantly, you may need to find a pastor or therapist to help you.

6. **Exercise:** Stress puts the body on “red alert,” ready for action. Without exercise, a revved up adrenaline system taxes the immune system causing sickness and disease. Find an activity you enjoy and get to it!
7. **Nature:** With modern technology, most of us are far removed from growing and living things. Gardening, bird watching, grooming a horse, playing with the dogs are all ways to re-connect with nature.
8. **Water:** Not only drink a lot of it, but lay in it! Studies show that soaking in a hot bath can relieve stress up to 60 percent.
9. **Music:** Learn to play a musical instrument. Even at the beginner level, playing the piano or guitar or whatever will calm you down (at least it may make you and others around you laugh!).
10. **No:** Learn to say this valuable word.
11. **Now:** Most people are living in the past (sadness, guilt, depression) or living in the future (stress, anxiety, worry). What about right now right here? “Carpe diem, seize the day,” is as sound a philosophy today as it was 1,000 years ago. We must learn from the past and prepare for the future, but living is right now right here.
12. **Connection:** Having good relationships ensures you will have social support, which is critical in reducing stress. Listen to people, be more empathetic, more tolerant. Involve yourself in family, church, activity groups.
13. **Serenity Prayer:** God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I can not change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen

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