

Six Tips to Reduce Stress

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

The car breaks down. Deadlines press at work. Conflicting family schedules. A midnight call that a friend is in the hospital. Losing your job. Caring for a sick child. Managing the care of an elderly parent. Planning a wedding. Having a new baby. Discovering a personal health issue. What do all these life circumstances have in common? Stress. Whether perceived as positive or negative, these things happen in life at different times, but all create a certain amount of uneasiness and lack of control to the daily routine of "normal" life.

When stress is not managed well, it leaves your body open to disease and illness. Properly managing the stress of life (which happens every day to all of us) will help you achieve your wellness goals. See if the following tips will help you to better maintain a peaceful spirit during stressful times.

1. Spend time in relationship with God. He knows your struggles, fears, and needs. He understands your worries and concerns. He desires to walk through life with you and give you strength. Consider what He has in store for you or what He wants you to do for others. Seek out the lessons that He desires to teach you through your circumstances. Look for His mercy and strength to carry you. This is the foundational element in total wellness of heart, soul, mind, and strength.

2. Develop a social support system. God did not create you to live in a vacuum. He created us to need one another because we can't do everything. Enlist friends and family to help during stressful times. They can always support and lift you up in prayer.

3. Exercise. Regular exercise will remove the build up of the toxic effects from the stress and use the "stress hormones" in a positive way instead of a harmful way. Studies show that taking a brief 10 minute walk during intense times will increase the amount of oxygen to your brain, allowing you to think more clearly and therefore make better decisions.

4. Choose to eat nutritious food. Eat foods that contain healthful sources of nutrients, antioxidants, and phytochemicals. God designed these nutrients to help your body with energy needs and to build and repair damaged tissue. Without these, you leave your body lacking what it needs. So, grab that apple instead of the afternoon candy bar.

5. Maintain a healthy weight. Extra body weight can add to the extensive work load of your heart as it tries to supply blood through the 200 miles of blood vessels per pound of fat. Keeping your weight in a healthy range will enable your body to more effectively deal with stress. Weight is only one of the many health indicators that impact your stress management. See your doctor for a complete picture of your health and ask him/her what is a healthy weight for your age and body type.

6. Use your sense of humor. On the days when everything seems to be going backwards, choosing to laugh at the irony of your circumstances not only lifts your mood but also puts your situation into an eternal perspective. The Bible confirms this in **Proverbs 17:22**. "**A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones,**" (Holman Christian Standard Bible).

Stress is inevitable. How you respond to it will determine your growth. Take steps to manage stress as God would desire for you to.