

# Employ These Strategies for Conquering Stress

*Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from Don Colbert's book, The Bible Cure for Stress, published by Charisma House.*

Believe it or not, you can live a life that is free of the negative effects of stress. God actually promises a way to have a peaceful, happy mind no matter how stressful your circumstances. The prophet declared to God, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." (Isa. 26:3, NKJV)

The Bible provides a strategy for living free from the negative effects associated with stress. You can live in God's wonderful peace every day of your life no matter what disappointments you face, what pressures you must endure and no matter how many difficult, stressful circumstances surround your life.

It almost sounds too good to be true; but it's not. Take a look at some strategies from the Bible that promise peace—no matter what!

## **Renewing Your Mind**

Not everyone experiences the same stress reactions to the same life events. For one person, speaking in front of a large group feels like a fun challenge, but it makes another individual a nervous wreck. If one person's relaxation is another person's stress, then circumstances are not the sole cause of stress. Your individual perception of the events in your life plays a vital role in your experience of stress as well.

Therefore, a powerful strategy for conquering stress is to deal with the roots of stress in your own life by beginning to

change your own perceptions and reactions to circumstances. This powerful strategy is taken directly from the Bible. The apostle Paul declared:

*“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.”* (Rom. 12:2).

With God’s help, we can develop new, less stressful ways of thinking. Doing so, in fact, is a command from God’s Word. It says, *“Be renewed in the spirit of your mind”* (Eph. 4:23, NKJV).

Renewing the mind is nothing more than breaking the thought patterns and ways of thinking and perceiving life’s circumstances that cause us stress. I call these stressful patterns “stinking thinking.”

Don’t let a mountain of stress avalanche down upon your life and health. There’s so much you can do to conquer that mountain and rise to the top. God never intended for stress to rob your life of happiness and peace.

Why not determine right now to begin implementing these mental strategies for conquering stress:

- Practice time management
- Reject perfectionism and unrealistic expectations
- Reject rigid words
- Just say no
- Learn to delegate

Living stressed out is not God’s best for you. His wonderful Word says:

*“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank Him for all He has done. If*

*you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 4:6-7)

With God's help and some wise strategies, you can develop entirely new, stress-free ways of living your life.

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## **Ominous Sign Signifies Israeli Shiva**

In Israel, when someone dies, we sit *shiva*. I will explain that in a minute.

However, you know that someone has died because a sign is posted for seven days at the home where they are grieving. Since most of Israel's population dwell in apartments, the sign is often posted at the entrance to the building. It could be the deceased's home or the home of an immediate relative. The sign looks like the image above.

This particular sign is written in the name of her family hung on our building door for the a few days in September. It said:

"With great regret and sorrow we are informing (people) of the death of my wife, our mother and grandmother. Underneath in larger letters is her name, and below that is information on the funeral, and even though it is written in the future

tense, the funeral most likely took place just after the sign went up. Next, it lists the mourners, her husband's name, the names of her son and two daughters as well as their spouses.

## **Unsettling Sign**

I have to admit I find these signs unsettling. For native-born Israelis, it is all they have.

But I don't come from a culture where, when someone passes, you are confronted with a large black and white sign that screams at you: Someone has died! Someone has passed into Eternity!

First, I began to index my neighbors. *Who died?* Did I know them? Was it the English teacher on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, or maybe that strange older fellow on the 1st floor who once asked me to help him connect his speakers to his computer?

I don't think it was Russian guy I see at the gym all the time. What if it was my neighbor Erica, a Holocaust survivor, or her husband? You see before I even have a chance to read the name, this massive sign has already injured my soul.

I look at the name—she's a female. She has grandkids. Someone handwrote that they are sitting *shiva* on the first floor. I don't recognize the name, but then again I don't know the names of all the inhabitants of the sixteen units in my building. I conclude that I did not know her and they are sitting *shiva* at the home of one of her children.

## **What is Shiva?**

*Sitting Shiva* is a seven-day mourning period immediately following the death of a loved one. Because a funeral in Judaism is supposed to be held within 24 hours, the *shiva* typically begins after the funeral. *Shiva* means seven. During this period, grieving family members wear a ripped piece of clothing to symbolize they are in mourning.

Friends and other relatives supply food and comfort during this week. It is considered a *mitzvah* (good deed) to visit a home in mourning during *shiva*. Prayer services are held at the home, and often neighbors will be drafted to come, no matter how religious or secular they are, in order to make up a *minyan*, a quorum of 10 adult (over 13) men—without which, you cannot have the prayer service. In the past, I have been asked to join.

When I wrote this in September, two floors below, a man had lost his wife. Three children buried their mother. And several grandchildren mourned the loss of their *savta*. And if not for the ominous sign downstairs, I would have no idea. If not for the sign, I never would have known about *Chasiya Teller*, beloved wife, mother and grandmother. I am sure she will be missed.

**Ron Cantor** is the director of **Messiah's Mandate Int'l** in Israel, a Messianic Ministry dedicated to taking the message of Jesus from Israel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Ron also travels internationally teaching on the Jewish Roots of the New Testament. He serves on the pastoral team of *Tiferet Yeshua*, a Hebrew-speaking congregation in Tel Aviv. His newest book, *Identity Theft*, will be released on April 16th. Follow him at @RonSCantor on Twitter.

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## Spiritual Disciplines: A Man and Counsel

**Editor's Note:** This article is excerpted and adapted from Moody Press' *A Man's Guide to the Spiritual Disciplines*.

Early in the 2001 NASCAR season, Steve Park had everything

going for him. He was driving for Dale Earnhardt, Inc. (DEI) and a big corporate sponsor, Penzoil. He even drove the big number "1" car.

Park was racing in the Sprint Cup (then Winston Cup) Series—the top league in stock cars, the "brass ring." Yet, like a lot of other guys, Park wanted to drive in other leagues as well.

He admitted that he was begging DEI to let him drive a Nationwide Series (then Busch Series) car, part of a less prestigious stock car league than Nextel. But his employers along with representatives from Penzoil said, "No. We don't want you risking your career on a Busch race."

Finally, because he kept insisting, they relented and let him run. Park said, "Then their worst fear was realized. Exactly what they told me over and over they were afraid would happen, did happen."

In September of 2001, Park's career took a significant downward turn when he crashed at the "Lady in Black," Darlington Raceway in South Carolina. Park was driving under a caution flag, readying for a restart, when he was involved in an accident.

His car came to rest against the inside wall, and he stayed pinned in the vehicle for 20 minutes, waiting to be extricated from the wreckage. Rescue workers finally had to cut away the car roof to get him out.

Park suffered a concussion, and he had to sit out the rest of the 2001 season and the beginning of the 2002 season. In 2001 he had been a title contender. In 2002 he was ranked 38th. He was released after the 2003 season, no longer needed.

Steve Park's story is our story. We may choose a course of action without taking counsel, without considering God's plans and desires. We're not really looking for His will, because

we've already decided what we want to do.

Like Park pleading with his owners and sponsor, we beg and beg—of people and sometimes God—to get what we want. Even when wise and experienced people give good counsel to go in a different direction, we choose to go our own way. And the price of going our own way is getting our own way. Perhaps the secret of contentment is not getting what we want, but wanting what we get.

## **Bible Truths about Counsel**

Verses throughout the book of Proverbs underscore this truth.

- “The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice” (Proverbs 12:15).
- “A mocker resents correction; he will not consult the wise” (Proverbs 15:12).
- “Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance” (Proverbs 20:18).
- “For waging war you need guidance, and for victory many advisers” (Proverbs 24:6).
- “He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe” (Proverbs 28:26).

## **Pursuing Wise Counsel**

Let's focus on a decision you're facing right now. You don't know whether to go left or right. You don't know whether you should stop or go backwards. I want to give eight practical suggestions to help you seek godly counsel.

**1. Understand that decisions fall into two categories.** Every decision you make will be either a moral or priority decision. Moral choices are choices between right and wrong. When a man asks any of the following questions, he is about to make a moral decision:

“Is it really that bad to fib a little when I calculate my

taxes?”

“Can I enter into a relationship with someone other than my wife without getting caught?”

“Who will get hurt if I fudge on my résumé?”

Priority choices are decisions between right and right. Here are two examples:

“Should I invest in this stock, or in that stock?”

“Which car should I buy?”

If you need counsel on a moral issue, go to someone with moral authority and knowledge. Seek counsel from people who know the Scriptures. That doesn't necessarily apply if you're making a priority decision. If you want to buy a good used car, you won't seek advice from a pastor or Bible study leader—unless, of course, they are really smart about cars.

**2. Ask yourself, “Am I decided or undecided?”** If you've already decided what you want to do, you'll seek counsel differently than if you really haven't made up your mind. You might be tentative about your decision, so you seek confirmation. Or you might really not know how to proceed. If you have already decided, I'd suggest you still should open yourself up to counsel, and be willing to listen.

**3. Distinguish between human ingenuity and God's wisdom.** God's wisdom is found in the Scriptures, and it is administered through the Holy Spirit. You must decide whether you're getting is human ingenuity or godly wisdom.

I am an idea person. I make ideas like popcorn machines make popcorn. The problem is, most of these ideas are terrible. Over the years, I've realized that most of my ideas are born out of human ingenuity, not godly wisdom.

So I don't rush into the office on Tuesdays for team meetings

and say, "We need to do this or we need to do that." I say, "Here are the ideas I've been thinking about this week. Which ones do you think might be worth pursuing?" We talk about it; we counsel. I don't say, "We're going to do this," because I've learned better.

**4. Choose your counselor based on your need for reason or passion.** Figure out whether you need to hear from the voice of reason or the voice of passion. If you are facing a moral decision, and you already know the right thing to do, you don't need the voice of reason. You need the voice of passion. You need someone to encourage and inspire and motivate you to do the right thing. You need someone to say, "You can do this. You can make it happen."

If you're muddled and confused, and don't know which way to go, you need the voice of reason. Analyze your situation, so you know what kind of person to choose as your adviser.

**5. Beware of the counselor with the quick answer.** Suppose you've been wrestling with an excruciating problem for many months. You go to someone seeking advice. You get out about three or four sentences. You unburden your heart a bit. And the counselor jumps in and says, "Let me tell you what to do."

Some counselors are quick to tell you what they would do, but they don't get to know enough about your issue to help you understand what you ought to do. Find someone who's willing to listen—someone who asks questions and tries to draw you out instead of telling you immediately what you should do.

**6. Remember that some people have agendas.** Employees have agendas. Salesmen have agendas. When you seek advice from someone, it's probably good to know if that person has a heart for you, or if he is seeking a particular outcome. For instance, it's stupid to expect objective advice from somebody who will gain financially if you say yes and lose financially if you say no. That doesn't necessarily mean their advice is

bad. In fact, it probably will be good. So go ahead and talk to that person. Get all the available information. But then go to someone who is for you and get additional counsel.

**7. Don't explode, don't pout, and don't put down.** What is the best way to get bad advice? Repeatedly chase away good advice. In the Old Testament, King Ahab's counselors gave horrible advice, because every time an advisor said something the king didn't like, he'd slash off his head or put the counselor in jail. Don't chafe at advice—even if you didn't seek it.

If you want honest, thoughtful advice, welcome any input, even the negative. Express gratitude—not judgment or frustration—with all advice you receive.

**8. Peace is the umpire.**

You've sought counsel, and it feels emotionally right. It makes sense. It reasons well. You feel peace. I believe that, as godly wisdom exposes itself, you'll know your answer when you come to that place of peace.

Whatever decision you are facing, I encourage you to seek wise counsel. I encourage you to find some trustworthy Christian brothers. Be honest with one another; open up. Seek counsel. Remember Proverbs 15:22: *"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed."*

Click here for the original article at .

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## **Make Physical Health a Priority in 2013**

The new year prompts us to consider new beginnings. That's

when we make New Year's resolutions that are broken all too soon. Yet as Christians, we should always be striving to become all we can be in Christ—that's what spiritual growth and being a disciple of Jesus are all about.

So when we turned our sights to covering health this month in *Charisma*, we decided to do more than just focus on physical health issues such as making dieting a New Year's resolution. Our articles cover God's perspective of health, which includes body, soul and spirit. It's an interesting mix featuring some poignant stories on dealing with an elderly parent's dementia and a father's perspective on why God doesn't heal his special needs son. In her typical tell-it-like-it-is style, Joyce Meyer addresses our daily battle with negative emotions, while Jentezen Franklin challenges us to make fasting more than just an annual event.

At Charisma Media we're committed to health. We believe God heals supernaturally, but that Christians also have a responsibility to care for our "temples." That's why we've pioneered in the field of health from a Spirit-filled perspective with our Siloam line of books that have sold millions of copies in the last 15 years and made the imprint the leader in that segment of the Christian book-selling industry.

We're expanding this in January with new websites and newsletters that bring the best of Charisma Media's health coverage to your email address or via our Charisma News app. On the Web, you can visit and sign up for our free newsletter, or download our free app at [. We'll have new content for you daily.](#)

If you don't already have our Charisma News app, you can text "charisma" to 24587 on your smartphone or download it at the iTunes store. Charisma News gives you "breaking news from a spiritual perspective," yet not only do we cover the charismatic community, we also use respected news wires such

as the Associated Press that offer up-to-the-moment news wherever it happens—everything from a tsunami in Asia to unrest in the Middle East. Our editors sift through the steady stream of information and reports to find what you need to read and, when applicable, add spiritual perspective to help you “discern the times.”

We did this on election night this past fall. I stayed up and posted an analysis at 3 a.m., and we followed that with commentary from leaders such as Jack Hayford, Francis Frangipane and R.T. Kendall. The response has been encouraging, proving that there’s a need for such unique spiritual insight into current events. And though we’ve promoted these new Internet offerings, the majority of their growth continues to be via word of mouth and social media as people read and share the articles. In November, for instance, our app had more than 1.5 million screen views. We hope to continue such growth by now expanding our app to include “tabs” for the new health sites, as well as some of our existing brands such as *Ministry Today* and *Christian Retailing*.

For many years it’s been my vision to serve the Spirit-filled community with reports on what God is doing. Not only is this not covered by secular news media, but other Christian sites are often anti-charismatic—so if there’s coverage, it’s critical. American culture is becoming increasingly hostile to anything Christian unless it’s so watered down it doesn’t threaten anyone. And sadly many Christians and ministries are compromising.

Yet as things become darker the church must become brighter. We must have new ways to communicate what God is doing amid the increasing bad reports. So if you feel what we do is important (and you must or you wouldn’t be reading this), please support these new ventures by visiting our sites, signing up for our newsletters or downloading our app. It doesn’t cost you anything.

On a personal note, I hope you'll follow me on Twitter (@sstrang) or Facebook (stephenestrang) and sign up for my Strang Report newsletter at .

As you start the new year, make a resolution not only to be more healthy physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. We're in a spiritual war and we need everyone to be fit and ready for battle to radically change our world through the power of the Holy Spirit.

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## **7 Tips to Develop Your Own Bible Reading Plan**

A man who became a Christian bought a Bible. He said, "Have you seen this thing?"

The Bible is daunting. At roughly 770,000 words, that's about 2,500 normal book pages—equivalent to 12 non-fiction books!

Bible reading falls into that special category of things we all know are important but struggle to do, like diet and exercise.

Every year since 1988 I've read the Bible cover to cover. This is certainly not required, but I've learned some things along the way that may be helpful to you.

As you might suspect, I've encountered every imaginable distraction from lack of motivation, inability to concentrate,

and outright laziness to barking dogs and making the mistake of checking my email just before I planned to read!

There have been times of emotional weariness, physical tiredness, and spiritual warfare. Nevertheless, I succeed because I have a plan.

If you already have a plan, great. But if you don't—and even if you do—here are seven tips to help you make the most of reading your Bible. At the end is an exercise, “My Bible Reading Plan,” for you to complete.

**1. A Purpose for Reading** – When I attend a meeting I like to ask, “What’s the purpose of our meeting today?” That way, we tend to stay on target. Uppermost, I read the Bible for communion with God. First and foremost, Christianity is a relationship with the Father who lavishes His love on me. When I read the Bible I am literally spending time with the living God who delights in me. The Bible, along with prayer, allows us the experience to holy presence of God for a few moments. Communion is what keeps me coming back. For everything else, there’s Google. I also read the Bible for discipleship—to grow and mature in faith. So, my purpose to read the Bible is for *communion* (knowing) and *discipleship* (growing). What is your purpose?

**2. A Fixed Routine** – My best time to read is early in the morning, because that’s when I’m fresh. I grab a cup of coffee and settle into a favorite chair for an unhurried time of prayer and reading the word of God. If it fits your personality, it’s a good idea to have a set schedule. Daily Bible reading (often called a “quiet time” or “personal devotions”) makes sense for the same reasons we recharge our cell phones. Of course, things come up—an argument with your spouse, an alarm that doesn’t go off, early meetings, or cranky kids. On average, I read about five days a week. How much time you spend reading is completely a matter of personal preference, but I like to read one day from an annual Bible

reading plan. What routine works best for you?

**3. Pray Before Reading** – It's a good idea to pray when you read. How I pray connects to my purpose: *communion* and *discipleship*. I start by bringing myself into the presence and power of God. I usually start by praying,

"Father, I come to meet with You. Please meet with me, Your much loved son. (Then I will usually add a few sentences, mostly repeating Scripture about God's love for me and my love for Him).

"Jesus, I come to meet with You. Please meet with me, Your much loved servant. (Again, I add sentences like, "I surrender my life today to Your Lordship.")

"Holy Spirit, I come to meet with You. Please meet with me, Your much-loved vessel. (Plus the additional sentences like, "Lord, I invite You to disciple my heart, to reveal what's inside of me, and to speak to me.")

Also, I pray about things as I read. How do you pray, or want to pray, when reading your Bible?

**4. It's Always Good to Have a Goal** – My friend Tom Skinner said, "When you set a goal, you are literally writing history in advance." If you're new to the Bible, your goal might be, for example, to read a chapter a day in the New Testament five days a week. (If you did this you would read all 260 chapters of the New Testament in one year: 52 weeks x 5 days = 260 chapters). I don't micromanage my Bible reading. Instead, I set one annual goal each year. That's to read through the Bible cover to cover annually. I don't worry if I miss a day or two. Call me "inconsistently" consistent. I like the flexibility of chasing down rabbit trails, such as looking up all the verses in the Bible on, say, "God's will." As I write this, I'm 20 days behind in *The One Year Bible*. It doesn't matter. You may prefer shorter goals. God has no set formula for Bible reading. What is your goal for reading the Bible?

**5. Increase Your Comprehension** – I mark up my Bible. Some may consider the Bible too reverent to mark. But from a learning theory perspective, writing things down improves my comprehension. I've got margin notes, underlines, arrows, check marks, asterisks, and a few chicken scratches I can no longer decipher! You can also journal in a notebook, on a computer, on scraps of paper, or in the margins of your Bible. I do them all. You may concentrate better with a display screen or a hard copy. If you learn better by listening than reading, the Bible is available in all popular audio formats. It's totally up to you. Memorization makes up an important part of my plan. I keep a list of verses I'm working on. At this point in my journey, it's rare to find myself in any situation without a verse coming to mind. Another part of your plan could be to teach the Bible. Preparing Bible lessons drives me deeper into the Bible than anything else. What can you do to increase your learning and retention?

**6. What to Do When Your Mind Wanders** – My mind wanders all the time. And to be honest, I like it. There are four possibilities when my mind wanders: the world, the flesh, the devil, or the Spirit. When your mind wanders, you have to figure out which one it is. If it is the world, the flesh or the devil, then of course you want to reel it back in.

However, if I read a text and my mind goes racing to a relationship that's not right, or I am convicted of a sin, or prompted to some good deed, then that is the Spirit and I let that happen. When I read a phrase or sentence that impacts me, I like to linger awhile, letting the Word soak into my soul. What if your mind wanders because you're tired and exhausted? When I get that way, I try to read out loud. If I still can't concentrate I just stop and live to read another day! What can you do when your mind wanders?

**7. Know What Keeps You Coming Back for More** – My commitment is to stay at it each day until I have what I call "a moment of humility," an overwhelming sense of God. It could be an

insight, a sense of awe, or feeling completely and totally loved. It's a moment when I feel the power and presence of God washing over me. I'm not looking for a self-help book. I want the truth. The truth is what's relevant and applicable. That's what keeps me coming back. What keeps, or will keep, you coming back for more?

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Click here for the original article at [. Visit Man in the Mirror on Facebook.](#)

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## **Syrian Generals Ordered to Attack Israel if Assad Falls**

Syrian dictator Bashar Assad has ordered his military chiefs to launch ballistic missiles at Israel if he is killed by rebel forces, according to sources in Damascus cited by Israeli media this week.

The online newspaper *Inyan Merkazi* reported Assad met with his top generals recently to express concerns he could be taken out by advanced U.S. missiles recently provided to rebel forces, or by a mob similar to the one that violently murdered former Libyan dictator Muamar Gaddafi. Should either of those scenarios become reality, Assad reportedly told the generals to unleash Syria's considerable missile arsenal on Israel and

Egypt.

Syria is officially in a state of war with Israel and hosts numerous terror groups dedicated to the Jewish state's demise. Assad is angry with Egypt due to the new Muslim Brotherhood-controlled government's support for Syrian rebel groups, many of which are fellow Islamists.

Last year Assad warned if his rule were truly threatened, he would ignite the powder keg that is the Middle East. That threat remains a very real concern.

The dangers to Israel present in the ongoing Syrian crisis cannot be underestimated—especially in the light of scripture:

*“The word of the Lord came to me again: ‘What do you see?’ ‘I see a pot that is boiling,’ I answered. ‘It is tilting toward us from the north.’ The Lord said to me, ‘From the north disaster will be poured out upon all who live in the land’”*  
*Jer 1: 13-14.*

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## **Pedestrian Safety Program Prevents Student Injuries**

Fewer kids were injured during early morning and after school hours once new traffic lights, pedestrian signals and speed bumps were put around New York City schools, according to a new study.

Those fixtures were added through the Safe Routes to School program, which received over \$600 million from the U.S. Congress in 2005 to improve kids' ability to walk and bike to schools across the country.

“Pedestrian injuries for children, while the numbers have gotten better over the past decade or so, they’re still pretty dismal,” said Charles DiMaggio, who worked on the new study at Columbia University in New York.

As a result of Safe Routes to School, the city’s Department of Transportation undertook safety improvements at the 124 New York City schools (out of a total of 1,471) with the highest injury rates in the city.

For the new study, DiMaggio and his colleague Guohua Li tracked injury rates around 30 schools that had finished safety projects by early 2009.

Between 2001 and 2010, they saw a 44-percent drop in the number of school-aged pedestrians who were injured in the hours just before or just after the school day—from 8 injuries per 10,000 kids each year to 4.4 per 10,000.

In comparison, there was no drop in injury rates in areas without pedestrian safety projects—they held steady over the decade at 3.1 annual injuries per 10,000 students.

The researchers noted in the journal *Pediatrics* that if the program was expanded, it could prevent 210 pedestrian injuries per year among New York City students.

The deputy director of the Safe Routes to School National Partnership said the same infrastructure changes can positively affect kids’ general health, as well.

“We’re reducing injuries to kids and when you reduce injuries, parents get more comfortable with their kids walking and biking,” said Margo Pedroso, who wasn’t involved in the new research.

Physically active kids are healthier, she told Reuters Health, and “one of the easiest ways to do that is to build it into a kid’s daily life. Taking that trip to school by foot or on a

bike instead of the back of the car, we really urge parents to do it.”

For parents who don't think it's safe enough for their kids to walk to school, she recommended working with other parents and the administration to push for sidewalks, new lighting and other safety improvements for the neighborhood.

New York State got \$31 million as part of Safe Routes of School, but the partnership no longer receives direct government funding – instead, it's one option states can choose to invest in out of a range of transportation programs, according to Pedroso.

DiMaggio called its impacts “very compelling.”

His study was funded by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health.

“Engineering interventions, like traffic calming, work,” DiMaggio told Reuters Health. “Education and enforcement, they're important, but these kinds of permanent changes to the built environment are critical.”

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## **Bridging the Gap: Be Creative With Your Teen**

It seems like just yesterday you couldn't pry your children off you with a crowbar. Everywhere you went, anything you were doing, they wanted to be along for the ride. Now they're hitting their teen years and, suddenly, hanging out with mom and dad ranks on the fun scale somewhere between typing a term paper on e-coli bacteria and cleaning out the rain gutters.

It's tough not to feel hurt when little Johnny or Suzie now sigh and roll their eyes at the very idea of engaging in a game of monopoly when, just two years ago, they would've sold their interest in Park Place just to keep the match going for another hour. Here are five things you can do to cope and maybe even reclaim some lost real estate with your kids when it seems they don't want to be with you.

**1. Don't take it personally.** Easier said than done but still, this is one of those "try and remember yourself at 13" moments. Looking back, the teen years are typically marked by a certain level of first time self-awareness and consequently, selfishness. While you shouldn't put up with insensitivity and rudeness, neither should you take it too hard when a trip to the mall with friends sounds better to your child than a day at the ballgame.

**2. Don't live on their level emotionally.** This relates back to number one on our list, "Don't take it personally." When our children brush off our attention or seem disinterested in our company, it's easy to feel rejected and to lash out with loud pronouncements about "the way it's going to be in our house." Or even more raw, "Well fine then, why don't you just go waste more time on Facebook! It's obviously more important than me!" Even if you feel that way, don't blurt that out to your child. That kind of anger isn't likely to lead to anything productive in your relationship and most certainly will cause the divide between you to widen.

**3. Stick to common ground experiences that can bridge the gap.** One of the great quotes from the classic comedy, "City Slickers" comes when Daniel Stern's character, Phil, reminisces, "When I was about 18 and my dad and I couldn't communicate about anything at all, we could still talk about baseball." What pleasures, hobbies, or passions have you and your child shared that might constitute common ground? Pursue them with your child and while you may not have deep, soulful, conversations about all that's going on in their lives during

the teen years, those shared experiences will provide a bridge of communication both now and later.

**4. Try taking on the Galactic Overlord for once.** Right? Seriously though, if your teen has a passion for video games or something else squarely outside of your experience, give it a try with them. Sometimes, connecting with your kids means entering their world. From a faith perspective, this DOESN'T include becoming the permissive parent who tacitly endorses that which is immoral for the sake of appearing "cool". You never want to secure your child's friendship at the cost of their respect for you as their parent.

**5. Plan regular opportunities that take you both away from familiar distractions and allow you to be one-on-one.** This can be touchy when it comes to insisting that your teen participates. But, when you put together a weekend in the mountains or at the beach, or anywhere but where you live, that doesn't include anyone but family, you open up opportunities to connect with your child that aren't usually available in everyday life. Removing peer pressure and the need to fit in allows your teen to breathe a little easier and let down long enough to let you in.

**All Pro Dad** is Family First's innovative and unique program for every father. Their aim is to interlock the hearts of the fathers with their children and as a byproduct the hearts of the children with their dads. At , dads in any stage of fatherhood can find helpful resources to aid in their parenting. Resources include: daily emails, blogs, Top 10 Lists, articles, printable tools, videos and eBooks. From fathers can join the highly engaged All Pro Dad social media communities on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram.

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# Israelis Really Know How to Live

Israelis have among the highest life expectancies on the globe, with an overall life expectancy of 81.7 years, according to a new study released by the Central Bureau for Statistics Tuesday.

The study, which covered Israeli demographic trends from 2011, found that although Israeli men can expect to live shorter lives than Israeli women, when compared to other men around the world they come in second only to Switzerland.

According to the study, the overall Israeli life expectancy of 81.7 years puts Israel in fifth place out of all OECD countries, and is two years more than the average OECD life expectancy of 79.7.

According to OECD data, Israeli men have an average life expectancy of 79.9 years, coming in second only to Swiss men, who have an average life expectancy of 80.6. Men in Japan, Sweden, Iceland and Australia have similar life expectancies to Israeli men.

But while Israeli women live longer than men and have an average life expectancy of 83.6 years, they fall below several other countries, especially the chart topper, Japan, where women can expect to live 86.4 years.

When broken down by sectors, there are also significant differences between Jews and Arabs in Israel. Israeli Jews have an average life expectancy of 80.7 years, while Israeli Arabs have an average life expectancy of 76.4. The life expectancy of Jewish women is 83.9 and of Arab women 80.9.

The study also examined fertility rates, and found that the average Israel woman has three children, while the average for a woman in the OECD stands at 1.7 children.

The fertility rate among Muslim women in Israel is higher than the national average, at children per woman. Jewish women, on average, have children each. Israeli women who do not classify their religion tend to have the fewest children, with children each.

Click here for the original article at .

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## **10 Questions to Ask Your Wife Every Year**

The best remedy for marriage conflict is marriage communication. Disagreements, fights, impasses, separations and divorce can be traced back to poor communication more than any other factor. Likewise, listening amounts to some of the best relationship medicine around.

Listening works best when we ask good questions. Good questions indicate bona fide concern. The man who asks good questions is already well on the way to communication excellence.

The best questions also serve as conversation starters. Remember, you are interested in her. But, once you start talking, she's going to ask stuff too. The more you know each other on a deep level, the easier it is to fall in love all over again.

Here are 10 good questions you should ask your wife, at least

every year:

**1. What do you think is going right in our relationship?** It's been a while since you took the marriage vows. But it's still true that positive affirmation leads to more productive change than negative evaluation. It's helpful to identify our strengths. Once we know them we can play to them. Building each other up is always win-win.

**2. Where would you like our relationship to be this time next year?** It doesn't matter where we are, there's always room to be better. She might say, "I'd like to see more spontaneous affection." Or, "I want us to be moving forward together in our faith." She could say, "I want our relationship to involve more fun!"

**3. Will you please marry me, all over again?** Say it with flowers. Say it like you mean it. Make sure your wife knows how much you cherish her.

**4. I'd love to hear about your dreams for the future.** A wise Hebrew writer once wrote, "Without a vision, the people perish." Listen to your wife, imagine great things together, and then step into the possibilities.

**5. Is there anywhere you'd like to visit this coming year?** Indulge a little whimsy. Listen, laugh together, fantasize about fabulous vacations, and then tuck the information away somewhere, so you can possibly plan a trip. A good husband listens to his wife's dreams. A great husband weaves them into their plans for the future.

**6. Do you think we're doing OK financially?** This needs to be an ongoing conversation. However, like any small business (and a family is like a business in many ways), the directors need to have a comprehensive annual meeting to evaluate the finances and the plan for the coming year.

**7. How are you doing health-wise?** Encouraging one another

necessarily involves accountability. Partners should never remain ignorant when it comes to health concerns. And not just physical health. It's also important to take inventory of each other's emotional well-being.

**8. If you could change one thing about our priorities as a family, what would it be?** Notice this isn't an invitation to criticize, but more an opportunity to grow together.

Possible answers might include:

- I'd like to see less TV time and more family time with one another at home.
- We're not eating together enough. I'd like to see dinnertime valued a little more.
- We say can't afford a family vacation, but then we eat out 2-3 times a week. Maybe we should shift that one around!

**9. Is there anything I devote regular time to that you see as a possible threat to our family/our relationship?** Patterns take time to emerge. When we look back—or from another person's point of view – sometimes we can see more clearly. Ask your wife if there are any adjustments you can make (Consistently late for dinner? Too much golf? Too many evenings with “the boys”?) that would help her to feel more secure.

**10. Are you happy?** It's a good question even if she says she's happy already. “What can I do to make you more happy?” is a great discussion. Again, this is where good, active, listening is very important. And your wife's greatest happiness will always be found in God, so encourage her to grow in her faith.