

14 Ways to Stress Less, Live More

Too often we are frantic to speed things up, determined to cram big things into small spaces and forever trying to be everything to everyone, only to realize it's an impossible task, which leaves us frustrated and stressed out. Let's look at some principles of Christian emotional **wellness**.

I'm reminded in Isaiah 58:11, "The Lord will guide you always. ... You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail" (NIV).

We are to lean on God in all things, as He will provide all of our needs. So instead of looking at the rest of this year as being full of "stress opportunities," I wanted to share these "**stress** reducers."

I'm not sure where I first saw a similar list; this is definitely not an original concept. I have made a few changes, reflecting more of my personality. Cut these out and place them on your refrigerator or bathroom mirror as a reminder of choices you can make every day—choices that will lead to a healthier you in the future.

1. Pray often, multiple times a day. I have found if we limit our relationship with God to a once- or twice-a-day experience, we miss out on a continual flow of His grace and blessing. Prayer is communication with God, a way to develop a relationship. If we only speak to Him once a day, how can we truly know Him?

2. Make your daily resting goal a minimum of seven hours of uninterrupted sleep. We don't need studies to prove lack of sleep results in a less-than-desired effect on our health, work and relational habits. We must be refreshed to be refreshment to others.

3. Lay out clothing the night before. This is an excellent habit to teach your children. If you find yourself standing in front of your closet for more than two to three minutes deciding what to wear, you can benefit greatly by organizing your wardrobe. Match outfits ahead of time, even down to the jewelry you will wear with them, and hang all the clothes together. (This is a great tip from my friend Jill Swanson, an image coach.) Guys, you can do the same with ties, socks and shoes—never assume it's only the girls spending time in front of the closet.

4. Say no more often. Burning the candle at both ends has become an acceptable pastime for all “good Christians.” But living a multiple-wick life leads to early burnout. Getting our priorities straight—God, family, job and other—will help in choosing which wicks to light. Just in case you're asking, spending time at church every moment the doors are open does not fall under the “God” slot; it may be under your “job” slot if you're a pastor or church secretary, but if not, it's “other.”

5. Delegation makes others stronger. Sure, you can choose to make yourself solely responsible for every detail of life in your house—or you can delegate tasks to capable others; your strength is seen in your weakest link. Teach the kids to set and clear the table, fold laundry, water the garden—any chore appropriate for their age and ability. Most importantly, don't stress out if they don't do it exactly your way.

6. Simplify and downsize your life, office and closets. Keep, store or give away. Repeat every six months.

7. Stop using credit cards. It's easy to whip out a credit or debit card for all those little purchases in life, but the statements at the end of the month can be major stressors. Instead, designate a cash amount for your weekly quick-spends (maybe \$30) and leave the credit/debit cards at home.

8. Plan for a rainy day. Here are some ideas: crossword puzzles, board games, favorite family movies. Plans change, but if we plan ahead for those unexpected changes, we can redirect hurt feelings or bouts of disappointment.

9. Oops items. Carry an extra car key in your wallet or purse, hide an extra house key, keep extra stamps in the car and make a photocopy of the credit cards you carry. Ask the family for ideas: "What do we always seem not to have at the time we need it? What would we hate to lose?" Making the list can be fun, and it will prevent stress-filled moments.

10. Do something just for fun at least once a week. Movies, fishing, time with the grandkids, garage sales, date night, the zoo, painting furniture—whatever works.

11. Incorporate at least 30 minutes of accumulated physical activity a day. I really believe stress can't live in an active body. I don't have scientific proof, unless you count my soon to be 97-year-old mother-in-law: cancer survivor, avid gardener (used a powerless push-mower for more than 50 years), walks one to two miles a day, and plays one mean piano for church, for her apartment complex and for family.

12. Journal your thoughts. Use a journal to reflect, share and recognize the positives God is doing daily in your life. Stress can consume our thoughts with *what if's* and *why not's*. If we make a conscious effort to pen the positives, we can loosen the grip of daily stress.

13. Laugh out loud. Four great ways to incorporate humor into your day: play with a puppy; run with your child; sit down in front of *Lucy*, *Carol Burnett*, or *The Three Stooges*; or record some at-home karaoke and play it back for friends.

14. Talk less; listen more. We have two ears, one mouth—there's a reason.

Allowing these simple changes to incorporate positive choices

in your life will open doors of opportunity for you to shine as a child of the King. This is the time to change—embrace it!

Linda Goldfarb is a certified physical fitness specialist, speaker and syndicated radio talk show host. You can download her weekly Not Just Talkin' the Talk radio broadcasts, a one-hour variety talk show based out of San Antonio, Texas, at . Linda's show encourages listeners to "walk the walk" spiritually, physically and relationally each and every day.