

Are You Crazy or Just Crazy-Busy?

“I will strengthen you, I will help you” (Isa. 41:10).

Hey, did you hear about 27-year-old Amber Miller, who, in her 38th week of pregnancy, completed the Chicago Marathon, then checked into a hospital to plunk out a healthy baby girl?

Now that’s what I call a mom on the fly!

Well, you and I might not officially run marathons, but we both know our feet fly at a marathoner’s pace most days. So many things we *must* do, a few things we *want* to do and countless things we *should* do.

You know, *should* is a dangerous word. It’s a stress-filled, pressure-packed slave driver. It ruthlessly inflates the bulk of a mother’s to-do list, often crowding out healthy sanity-essentials with guilt-induced clutter.

“I *should* go to that parents’ meeting; in a weak moment, I said I’d be treasurer.”

“My mother thinks I *should* cook a big dinner every night like she did.”

“I really *should* make time to bake a pie for my new neighbor.”

“Shouldn’t I crochet cute beanies for my kids like Perfect Patti does?”

“I *should* clean my house so the kids won’t write notes in the dust.”

Our *shoulds* may be fueled by self-comparisons with friends and neighbors, subtle cultural messages, high expectations imposed on us by church, civic, or family members or maybe even unrealistic regulations we’ve self-inflicted to become a perfect mother ... as if that fairy-tale creature really exists.

But as every woman striving to squeeze into last year's skinny jeans knows, more isn't always better; sometimes it's simply overwhelming. You know, we can be "whelmed" without being overwhelmed. "Whelmed" is livable; "overwhelmed" is strangling. We just have to recognize that we truly do have the power to choose which *shoulds* are potential *coulds* ... and then unapologetically embrace the woman our choices make us.

Only then can we clear the choking clutter and take a deep, cleansing, reinvigorating breath. *Whew*. The pressure is now manageable.

Once when I was playing baseball with my preschool grandbuddy, Blaine, his mama started filming. Suddenly I couldn't pitch the ball straight for love nor money. "Whoa! The pressure's on!" I acknowledged, throwing the ball everywhere but over the plate.

Blaine, wise beyond his 5 years, calmly laid down his bat, reached for an imaginary faucet valve, turned it, and said, "Okay, Mimi. Now the pressure's off. Play ball!"

Yep, sometimes we need to take the initiative to turn off the pressure valve and just play ball. Here are a few tried-and-true suggestions to stymie the flow:

—Be stress-smart. When you're slammed into a stress mess, sit yourself down and have a calming cup of your fave hot beverage and a snack (*not* baby carrots—something satisfying but not too fattening so you don't add calorie remorse to your stress baggage). Close your eyes. Tune in to Papa God's loving presence. His heartbeat. His peace. Slap guilt to the curb when the tyranny of the urgent attacks; *you* are important. Everything else can wait a few minutes. I promise you the world will not end while you regroup. Unless the kids start a fire in your panty drawer.

—Move to the front. Promote yourself off the back burner. Don't argue, girl, just do it. You may sacrificially place yourself there routinely, but your Creator doesn't. You're a

front-burner person to Him. He wants you to enjoy this marvelous gift of life He's given you, not sludge through it. So it's time to add a little fun to your day. Write yourself into your schedule for an hour of something you enjoy a minimum of three days a week—walk in the sunshine, bike a woodsy trail, sing, boogie, dig in your garden until you find Papa God there, get your nails done—whatever tingles your toes. Put that beautiful smile back on your face. And speaking of pots on burners. . .

—Avoid B00P—Boiling Oatmeal Overflow Phenomenon. B00P is one of my Coty Near-Facts of Science (theories not yet proven by actual scientific studies but nonetheless known by women to be true). You see, I postulate that women are like pots of oatmeal; at the beginning of the day we simmer—little manageable bubbles of stress rise to the surface and harmlessly pop. But as the day progresses, the heat escalates and the oatmeal boils higher and wilder and meaner until it overflows and spoils everything around with a nasty, ugly, sticky mess. The key to avoiding B00P is to know when to remove the pot from the heat.

—Be a dipstick. The Lord puts only enough fuel in your daily tank for you to arrive safely at the destination He's routed out for you. All the detours you add will either run you out of gas or land you in a ditch. Check your tank, review your destination, and then engage in the Three Ps: Prioritize, Plan and Pace yourself. {eoa}

Debora M. Coty is an inspirational speaker and author of the popular book series, *Too Blessed to be Stressed*. Her passion is sharing a blend of biblical truth gift-wrapped in humor, encouragement, and unconventional wisdom with women of all ages. She believes that the stresses of life become manageable when we truly understand God's blessings. She currently lives, loves and laughs in central Florida with her husband, Chuck. They have two grown children and four grandchildren. Readers can connect with Debora via her website, , or on Facebook

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This article is excerpted from Debora's most recent book, Too Blessed to Be Stressed for Moms (Shiloh Run Press, 2018).