

Seriously, Why Not Take Better Care of Yourself?

I hesitate to even bring it up, because I know you're doing the best you can. You've got life so jam-packed that you have to schedule your meals. The kids need to get to practice; laundry needs to be done; someone has to cook the meals, and all the while your boss is micro-managing your new project. Who has time to take care of themselves?

You do. Look, you're going to run yourself into the ground if you don't stop and make your health a priority. You certainly won't be much good to those around you if you're always over-worked and ultra-stressed.

Recently, I realized that I was falling into the trap of being Supergirl. Fast food and caffeine fueled many sleep-deprived days, and I had this silly notion that I was actually being productive by skipping breakfast. It didn't take long for me to smell the familiar embers of burnout. I needed to change. I examined my life and found a few things to be universally essential.

Sleep. If I hear one more person say, "I'll sleep when I'm dead," I will knock them out myself. This isn't an option; we have to sleep! Sixteen hours of running the day-to-day operations of your life is exhausting. Your body needs to rest, so invest in a good mattress (pillow tops work wonders as well).

Step away from the fast-food counter. I am guiltier than anyone of this, which is why I can speak from experience. Fast food is convenient and quite satisfying, but a steady diet of this will have your blood sugar and bad cholesterol levels through the roof. This isn't the kind of fuel your body requires. A diet of foods that can actually be found in nature

will give you more energy and not add to your waistline.

Meditate on God's Word. As long as I've been a Christian, I still have trouble getting on a regular schedule with reading my Bible. However, I need those mornings and evenings when I sit down with a readable translation (such as Contemporary English or The Message) and ponder what God is saying. I am at my calmest state when it's just Him, His Word and me. It's a quiet rest that He's inviting all of us to.

Exercise. You know this is good for you. You feel that tug every time you drive past a jogger. You might just be envying how thin she looks, but what you don't see is how she's getting rid of stress and releasing those endorphins that make her feel good. Exercise is more than just a method to lose weight. You can lose that stress too.

Don't Eat Lunch at Your Desk. The workday needs a natural intermission that includes a change of scenery. If you work in an office, take your breaks seriously and get out of your work area. Walk around the city or find a park. The fresh air and sunlight is rejuvenating and keeps you from suffering the dreaded afternoon crash.

Breathe. A massage therapist taught me this once. Imagine your body is an empty bottle and the air you breathe is like water. Breathe in through your nostrils until you fill all the way up inside. Then, through your mouth, exhale and pour it all out. Don't you feel better? It's a God-given, built-in de-stressing mechanism.

A lot of this is knowing yourself. For example, with sleep, my father has been surviving on five hours a night for as long as I can remember, and that works for him. Personally, I can't function without seven. You have to know your body.

Also, these are things that help me, but maybe yours are different. You might need to learn how to say no or to delegate responsibilities. It could be helpful for you to work

in your garden more often or schedule regular date nights with your spouse. Again, you can tailor your life to fit your physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

No matter what stage of life you're in, you can find excuses to not do the right thing. It's time to take relaxation seriously. Work with what you've got to be the best version of yourself.

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