

Simple Ways to Shed Oppressive Stress

Stress—we all have it. It is a normal part of life. It can either help us get a job or a task done or it can cause us to deny the job that should be accomplished is even is stress you cause yourself by unnecessarily worrying and stress that is heaped on you from circumstances that seem beyond your control. Either are enough to make me holler, “Calgon, take me away!”

Let’s take the second one first. I just like to mess with your mind that way!

Stress that appears to be something we can’t control usually falls in the categories of medical, financial, career, family and relationship issues.

Stress Issues

Medical issues are difficult to manage. If you or someone you love has been given a terminal diagnosis, for instance, there may be little you can do to change it. Diseases can overtake us at any time. Accidents do happen.

Financial problems can hound us day and night, if it’s not creditors calling is worry about when they will start calling or if we are going to return home to an eviction notice. It may feel like we are running only a half step ahead of disaster.

Career or work difficulties can implode in seconds. One day you are working and everything is going fine, and the next you are laid off because the company is going broke and although there were signs, you never thought it would come to this.

Probably one of the most stressful categories is family and

relationship issues. Of course, if the problem is with someone you live with whether a family member, significant other or roommate, it's difficult to get away from. The stress can appear to be relentless.

Although each of these can be categorized as things done to us, how we relate to them can be undue stress we cause ourselves.

What Is Stress?

The dictionary says stress is "a state of mental tension and worry caused by problems in your life, work, etc." In actuality, how much tension we have over the various difficulties in our life depends on how much we allow ourselves to worry about them.

If we are overly worried about what will happen to our health, it can actually cause our health to decline. On the flip side, stress can motivate us to improve our medical chances by eating healthier and exercising more regularly.

In other words, stress does not have to be negative. It can help us accomplish what we need to get done. However some people run to things that hurt them in order to cope with stress. Among the list of maladaptive ways of coping are drugs, pain medicines, alcohol, smoking and, of course, eating.

How We Handle Stress Matters

It goes without saying that all of these can make stress worse instead of better. However, there are ways of managing stress without going crazy or, in my case, crazier than I already am.

Individuals all handle stress differently. However, if a person has good nutrition, good overall health, fitness and emotional well-being and gets the proper amount of sleep and rest, they will be better able to handle stress.

The problem is we short-circuit this by overeating, staying up late, worrying and obsessing.

Everyone worries to some degree. To obsess about it means it takes over your thought process. Your brain can't get away from it and constantly goes in endless circles trying to change the situation, circumstance or person you feel has caused the situation.

One of the first steps in ending obsession and stress is to change your relationship with the situation, circumstance or person. You can't change them, but you can change yourself.

Positive Ways to Handle Stress

Can you do something positive instead of negative in stressful times? Instead of overthinking and going in endless cycles can you pray, meditate, practice deep breathing or journal your thoughts?

Can you symbolically take the things you are worrying about and put them in a box or on a shelf and put your mind on a task that will be beneficial such as something you can work on, a hobby you enjoy or a sports activity you love?

Find one small thing you can accomplish that will make you feel better about yourself. Organize your closet. Clean out a drawer. Organize the spice rack. Plan your menus. Balance your checkbook. Wash, dry, fold and put away a load of laundry. Clean the garage. Plant flowers. Paint a picture. Rearrange the furniture.

Can you listen to calming music, listen to a good message or read Scripture?

Ah, speaking of Scripture, look up all the verses on worry. Here are a few to get you started.

Read Scripture

“Who among you by taking thought can add a cubit to his stature?” (Matt. 6:27).

“Therefore, take no thought about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take thought about the things of itself. Sufficient to the day is the trouble thereof” (Matt. 6:34).

“Heaviness in the heart of man makes it droop, but a good word makes it glad” (Prov. 12:25).

“Take away anger from your heart, and remove distress from your body, for youth and the dawn are vanity” (Eccl. 11:10).

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with gratitude, make your requests known to God” (Phil. 4:6).

Pray

It is so true, you can do nothing about your problems, situations, circumstances or people by worrying about them. Give them to God and leave them there.

When you find yourself worrying a problem over and over in your mind, just say, “Father, is there something I need to do in regard to this?” Do whatever He tells you or shows you to do.

If there is nothing, then say, “Father, I give this problem to You. I will not worry about it any more.”

Remember this, worry is praying to yourself. You cannot change the situation. You can only change the way you respond to the situation.

Let it go into the hands of a very capable Father God.

Now, go take a good long soaking bath and then, go do something where you can make a difference! {eoa}

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