

Stress Busters

If you choose not to be anxious, God will envelop you with His peace.

A certain level of stress is normal and expected in life, but if stress is severe, continuous or long-lasting, your health will be jeopardized. Here are some powerful stress busters to help you create a foundation of good health:

Eat well. Expand your knowledge of nutrition and utilize it to gain the benefits of eating well. Eat what is good for you, and avoid what isn't. Besides choosing foods that are health producing, make every aspect of your meals—menu planning, table setting, cooking, eating and even dish washing enjoyable social times with your family and friends. Eating the right foods in the right quantities and in pleasant settings will strengthen you to face distressing challenges.

Sleep deeply. Sound sleep is essential for maintaining your emotional health and a healthy immune system. Most people don't get enough sleep. Find out how much you need by sleeping without being awakened by an alarm clock for several days in a row.

If you have trouble falling asleep, try following a regular evening routine that does not include vigorous exercise or caffeine, and alter your bedtime by no more than an hour on weekends.

Confide in a friend. In times of stress, you need to be able to talk about your problems with someone who is concerned about you. Laugh together, too, because laughter releases tension.

Express yourself in creative ways. Do you have a hobby? If so, indulge in it—whether it's painting, gardening, dancing, writing in a journal, refinishing furniture, playing a musical

instrument, singing or some other activity.

Simplify your life. Take inventory of how you spend your time, money and energy, and decide whether you need to continue investing them the way you are. If you are overextended, learn to use the magic word *no*. Make time to stop and smell the roses.

Exercise your body. Regular exercise naturally enhances your mood and releases stress. The increased circulation of your blood also improves your immunity against disease. And exercise makes your body more fit for handling physical challenges.

You don't have to go to a gym or other structured environment, unless that's what you prefer. You can work exercise into your daily life by taking the stairs instead of the elevator, parking farther from your destination and walking, or tossing a ball with a family member in the backyard.

Make time to unwind. Convince yourself that it's all right to do "nothing." Set aside a period of time every day to relax and listen to music. Take a warm bath. Stroll around the neighborhood or find a comfortable place to practice deep breathing. Whatever you choose, make sure it's an activity that makes you feel refreshed, renewed and rejuvenated.

Give of yourself. Helping someone else is one of the best ways to get your mind off your own problems. Reach out to someone in your church or community who has greater needs than you do. You may even want to become part of a group that does this on a regular basis.

Take stress-busting herbs. Some herbs can help reduce stress. These include Siberian ginseng, valerian, passionflower, St. John's wort and kava. The amino acid 5-HTP (5-hydroxytryptophan) can also be of benefit. If you are taking prescription drugs of any kind, be sure to check with your physician before adding herbs to your daily regimen. Also,

refer to my book *Change Your Food Change Your Mood* for further information about these herbs and precautions regarding their use.

Pray. Most important, give your cares and worries to the Lord, who will carry your burdens for you. If you choose not to be anxious, He will envelop you with His peace.

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