

## Trading Stress for Joy

**What is Stress?** It is a result of pressure from people or circumstances that can make us feel tense inside. Stress is an unavoidable fact of life. Stress and how we handle it affects our health and happiness.

**What can Stress do to us?**

1. Interfere with daily activities
2. Cause physical symptoms
3. Cause mental and emotional distresses

**What is the cause of Stress? One of the main causes of Stress is change.**

**Some of these changes are listed below:**

1. Personal loss (death, loss of friends, separation, divorce, etc.)
2. Illness/Injury (major illness, accidental injury)
3. Change in Lifestyle
4. Job Changes (trouble at work, getting fired, new job, workload, etc.)
5. Financial Problems (budget troubles, large debts, loss of income, etc.)
6. Family Changes (pregnancy, family responsibilities, parents living in the home, etc.)
7. Retirement (enforced leisure, loss of income, etc.)

**Stress if not dealt with properly can produce anxiety and depression.**

**Anxiety.** A vague fear that something bad or unpleasant is going to happen - even if there is no real threat. Common Signs: nervousness, trembling, dizziness, pounding heart, inability to slow down or relax, abnormal eating habits, troubled breathing. Certain amounts of anxiety are normal. (responses to stressful or threatening situations) Prolonged anxiety can lead to serious problems. (ulcers, high blood pressure, inability to enjoy life, etc.)

**Depression.** A feeling of sadness, disappointment, or discouragement that leads to apathy and withdrawal. Common Signs: fatigue, sleeplessness, inability to concentrate, restlessness, boredom, lack of interest in food, sex, and life in general, feeling of worthlessness, hopelessness. Some depression is normal. (a reaction to the reality of falling short of what was hoped for) Prolonged depression is a serious problem (long-lasting feelings of worthlessness and isolation can lead to suicide).

**What can we do to relieve stress?**

1. See your physician (a checkup will discover the cause of frequent "aches and pains") [Matthew 9:12] "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick." Ref. Proverbs 4:20-22
2. Talk it over (discuss the problem with a close friend or those involved) [Ephesians 4:29] "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear." Ref. Proverbs 15:1
3. Take a break (change of pace) [Psalm 37:7] "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who carries out wicked schemes."
4. Learn to relax (teach yourself to relax - get quiet) [Matthew 11:28] "Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Ref. I Peter 5:7

5. Exercise regularly (swim, walk, bicycle, jog, etc.) [3 John 2] "Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers."

6. Plan your work (use your time and energy more efficiently) [Proverbs 16:9] "The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps." Ref. Proverbs 19:21

7. Be realistic (don't expect too much of yourself, set practical goals) [Proverbs 3:5,6] "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

8. Avoid stress (if possible plan to avoid too many big changes at the same time) [Psalm 131:1] "O Lord, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty; nor do I involve myself in great matters, or in things too difficult for me." Ref. Psalm 139:6

If we ask God to help us deal with the causes of our stress and our responses to them, we can truly stand on God's Word in Galatians 5:1 "It was for freedom that Christ set us free: therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery."

After which we can all agree with Nehemiah 8:10 which says "...the joy of the Lord is your strength."