

Public seminar/workshop

Stress, Dystress and Distress

*A programme of
practical coping skills
for the management
of the stresses
in your life.*



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Presented by Dr. Lionel Hartley

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Seminar Transcript
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Stress, Dystress & Distress

Seminar Transcript

Lionel D C Hartley

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Stress, Distress & Distress - Seminar Transcript
Condensed from the book "Stress, Distress & Distress"
also by Lionel Hartley (CLP, 1989)

Lionel Hartley, PhD

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Nine year old Peter Blank, interested in things mechanical, volunteered his services after school in a local wood joinery shop. Here in a converted brewery, the smell of beer long since replaced by the heady fragrance of freshly-sawn pine, and the noisy clanking of

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bottles replaced by the
buzz of timber shaping
and cutting machines.
Here the busy craftsman
and his equally talented
wife fashioned rough
timber into beautiful
furniture. Childless, they
adopted Peter for an
hour or two each
afternoon, so hot
chocolate and jam
scones always preceded
his labour.

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For Peter, no special genius was required. Sometimes he stacked timber or swept up sawdust. Occasionally he helped to hold an item while glue clamps were applied or to help steady an extra large item while it was fed into an hungry planing machine or saw-bench. Always he was allowed to take home an off-cut or two, a few nails or screws, or wooden

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dowels to fashion some
creation of his own.
Mostly he just talked with
youthful enthusiasm and
stood by watching with
fervent interest. On one
sad occasion he stayed
there on his own to
answer the telephone or
greet customers
because, having
witnessed the wife lose
a finger while using the
band-saw, the craftsman


and his wife left him “in charge” while they hurried to the hospital.

Often they chatted about their God. The couple was Christian, but not religious. Unlike Peter, they attended no church, but they knew their God personally and shared their simple faith enthusiastically, reminding Peter often that God has a personal


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interest in each of us and that we all have our own Guardian Angel.

One particular incident gave them opportunity to remind him of this often. That day, Peter had been helping to hold a large glue-bound tabletop while the craftsman manoeuvred it across the circular saw bench. With such a large item covering the saw-bench,


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neither of them gave thought to a doweling drill on the same shaft as the saw-blade. This twist drill, revolving in unison with the blade, protruded out from the side of the bench and was protected only by a little metal shelf a few centimetres below it. As the pair slid the tabletop across the saw-bench, the spinning drill bit grabbed the front of Peter's cardigan. Within


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seconds, his head was being pulled downwards toward the fast rotating blade.

Instantly, the machine was stopped by the quick-thinking craftsman, but momentum kept the blade spinning and the relentless drill was gathering up the frightened youth's cardigan and pulling him closer and closer to the

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deadly whining circle of hungry teeth. Peter's eyeball felt the brush of air from the blade as it loomed closer. Finally the craftsman wedged a piece of wood against the blade, stopping it suddenly just as it was beginning to lick the hair off Peter's forehead. With hearts pounding and breath hard to come by, they both sighed thanks to God.

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Peter sensed the nearness of a God who had spared him, and often the craftsman and his wife, followers of their Master's trade, reminded the youth that God must have a special work for him, a lesson that is not finished yet.

Is the blade of stress licking at the locks of your hair?

What is stress?

Peter Hansen describes stress as simply the adaptation of our bodies and minds to change.

Definitions: (Oxford English Dictionary)

Stress: a strain or demand on physical or mental energy.

[Middle English from distress, or partly from

Old French *estresse*

'narrowness,
oppression', or from Latin
strictus 'strict']

Distress: severe pain,
sorrow, anguish,
breathlessness,
exhaustion; affliction,
anxiety

May be totally unrelated
to stress as a cause but
may, in fact, cause

stress.

Terms coined by
pioneer stress researcher
Hans Selye


Dystress: bad stress.

Greek *dus*- 'bad' + stress

Eustress: good stress.

Greek *eu*- 'good' + stress


Today we are going to
look at a twenty-step
process for coping with
Stress and Dystress.




During the examination of this process we will learn a few extras along the way. Although with a certain amount of modification, the actual ideas for the headings for these twenty steps come from Timothy Ponder's book, *How to Avoid Burnout*.

1. Review your philosophy of life.

Ask yourself, What are the things in my life, which I consider to be the most important? Is getting ahead professionally the supreme object of life, or do I have my profession in its proper place? Take a look at where your religious experience is. Is it something which you

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confine to two hours a week, or does it have top priority every day? How important are human relationships to you-your family and friends-in comparison with your work? Take stock of the four main areas of your life: the physical, mental, spiritual, and social. How badly are they out of balance due to your burned-out condition?


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Look into the future.
Establish for yourself
some long-term and
short-term objectives.
Part of the problem we
sometimes face may be
due to the fact that we do
not have any closely
defined direction to our
lives. We keep pushing
ahead, day by day, week
by week, but do not have
a view of the big picture.


2. Be aware that you may be going through a major crisis in your life.

We must not seek to deceive ourselves into thinking that all is well, when in fact we are hurting inside.

Many people are too proud to acknowledge the fact that they have anything lacking within themselves. Being true Laodiceans, they firmly


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declare about their lives,
“I am rich, and increased
with goods, and have
need of nothing.” Denial
is always damaging to a
person, because it only
postpones the inevitable:
the need to take a good,
honest look at himself
and his situation. It is
even possible to
submerge oneself into a
round of never-ending
“good” activities in order
to avoid the needed soul-

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searching. The old saying certainly applies here: “We can run, but we can’t hide.” Dystress and its symptoms will eventually catch up with us, of this you can be sure.

Awareness, the exact opposite of denial, is an essential component in recovering from dystress. Awareness means that we simply take a good,

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honest look at ourselves and our situation. By becoming aware, we refuse to rationalise away our condition by saying, “Well, that’s life. I can’t expect anything better for my-self.” we realise life has more to offer than what we’re currently experiencing.

Increasing your awareness does not mean that you turn your-


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self into an emotional hypochondriac. You do not need constantly to run around and tell everyone how you feel. Awareness is primarily for your benefit, and much of it should be self-contained. However, you should turn to certain key individuals for help and guidance during this difficult time. (We'll talk about this more, later.)

3. Analyse which life events are causing you to feel stressful or dystressed.


Having done that, think of how you will relate to those events and situations in the future.

Remember this: the cause of your dystress cannot be placed solely at your doorstep. You have not arrived here only because of a

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character weakness or inadequacy, which you might possess. There are stress factors in your work and home environment, which have precipitated the burnout. Of course, these stressful things may be bothering others around you too. This is one of the reasons why support groups are important.

(While you are delaying

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with these stress factors,
make sure that none of
them are your own fault.
We punish ourselves at
times with stressful
situations of our own
creation, then we blame
those around us for our
self-inflicted anxiety.)

DAILY STRESSORS*

Work Related (47% of all daily stressors)

1. Monotonous, repetitive tasks such as assembly line work, clerical, or typing jobs

2. Work-related meetings

3. Daily deadline pressure

4. A discussion with the boss

5. Taking and making work-related phone call

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Friendships (14% of all daily stressors)

1. Argument with opposite sex (boyfriend or girl friend)

2. Waiting for a friend who is late

3. Anger over an interpersonal event

4. Arguments with friends

5. Socializing with a group of friends

Home responsibilities
(10% of all daily
stressors)

1. Doing housework
(cooking, cleaning, etc)
after a full day's work

2. Shopping (especially
when crowded)

3. Machinery (heater,
auto, etc.) not working

4. Short-run financial
concerns

Traveling (9% of all daily stressors)


1. Riding the bus, train, or subway

2. Transportation delay on either side of a commute

3. Driving a car

4. Rushing to be somewhere on time

5. Being stuck in a traffic jam

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Educational (7% of all daily stressors)

1. Being in class
2. Studying, reading, etc. (homework)
3. Taking a test
4. Asking questions in class
5. Teaching others in a class

Family (5% of all daily stressors)


1. Visiting relatives
2. Worrying about an offspring
3. Playing with and/or caring for an offspring after a day's work
4. Argument with your spouse
5. Scolding an offspring

Miscellaneous (8% of all daily stressors)

1. Insomnia for 30 minutes or less due to your thinking about the day's activities.

2. Going to the doctor or dentist


3. Being alone and feeling lonely



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In her book *Burnout: From Tedium to Personal Growth*, Dr. Ayala Pines describes the five major coping strategies for distress:

1. Direct Active

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You can change the source of the stress (such as, transferring to a new department).

You can confront the source.

You can adopt a positive attitude about it.

2. Indirect Active

You can talk about the source of the stress.

You can change something about

yourself.

You can get involved in other activities.

3. Direct-Inactive

You can ignore the source of the stress.

You can avoid that source.

You can leave from the presence of the source.

4. Indirect-Inactive (not recommended because it

weakenes the individual rather than helping him)

You can become involved in alcohol and drugs.

You can become ill and collapse because of the stress.

You can worry and cry about the stress.


Direct action is defined as a strategy which is applied externally to the

source itself. Indirect action involves a strategy applied internally to one's behaviour. Dr. Pines says there exists also an ...


5. Active-inactive

dimension in dealing with this problem. An active coping strategy would confront the source of the stress, while an inactive coping strategy would withdraw from it.

From the first three

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groupings, a person must decide which solution is best for his or her situation. There are times, for example, when it is important to confront someone at work who is causing you stress and anxiety. At other times, it would be wiser and safer to ignore and avoid that source, or even, if possible, to develop a positive attitude about him (even if he is


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impossible to work with!).
The worst response that someone can have to a stressful situation is denying that it exists. We need to honestly and wisely deal with the problems that come our way. If we don't, then they will only grow larger. Please notice that a distinction is made between avoidance and ignoring on the one hand, and denial on the


other. Those who choose to avoid and ignore still realise a problem exists, but they have decided not to confront the stress source head on.

4. Consider changing parts of your life which bring you dystress.


No, I'm not saying you should divorce your husband or wife. They may be causing you a tremendous amount of

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stress, but separation, and especially divorce, should be thought of as a last resort. (Isn't it curious that many divorced people marry again, with their second marriage often having the same tension, stress, and unhappiness as their first one did?) Major and minor adjustments are needed from time to time in a marriage in order to keep it healthy. As the


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two marital partners communicate with one another, they accomplish the task of adjusting to each other's minds and expectations. If they fail to make these adjustments through-out their marriage, then the problems get worse. Eventually, they reach the conclusion that a major change is needed- namely, separation and divorce. How often a little

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mid-course correction
would keep a marriage
from ending up on the
rocks!


When I use the word
change, I am referring to
the times when you leave
your present pursuits and
goals, choosing to walk
away from them entirely
and begin again. At times
this change is needed,
especially in the work
and study environment.

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Change is needed when you find yourself trying to do tasks which are totally beyond your abilities.

This imbalance naturally makes a person uptight and tense. For example, a salesman may feel his monthly quotas are too much of a burden, and he does not consider the pressure worth it.


Perhaps you may find yourself in a position which requires giving a

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lot of orders and directions, but you feel very 'uncomfortable' doing so. If you are a follower, rather than a leader, then you should be functioning in the role of a follower, not a leader.

5. Learn to accept what you cannot change about your life and work.

Situations arise where a job or even a career


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change is necessary to escape dystress. On the other hand, it is not necessary to “jump ship” every time something goes wrong in one’s life and work. Often what is needed is a “breaking in” period. During this span of time you should seek to come to grips with the difficult situation you are facing. If you are new on the job, for example, do not quit when the going

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gets rough. If possible, try to stay long enough to learn how to perform that job. You may then discover that the job is just not for you, and then you may want to consider a change.

Someone has penned the “Serenity Prayer.”: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the

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things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” Certain situations are incapable of being changed. Others can be changed, although it might take considerable effort. (At times the struggle to bring about the change may not really be worth it.)


Psychologists have a

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term for the wisdom of knowing what one can change and what one cannot change; they call it “cognitive clarity.” Their study has shown that this cognitive clarity is one of the important steps one must take in order to pull out of the dystress state.

Says Dr. Pines:

“Burnout often manifests itself in people who assume that everything


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destructive and
dehumanising can be
changed. These people
invariably end up
banging their heads
against the stone wall of
a non-responsive
bureaucracy. Some
aspects of a bureaucracy
simply cannot be
changed. After trying and
failing, they obviously
begin feeling helpless
and hope-less and come
to believe that nothing


can be changed.”

Cognitive clarity protects us from falling into such a trap.


What do you do when you are faced with a situation which is unchangeable and far from ideal? Do you grit your teeth and block out the unpleasantness from your mind? Occasionally you have to do this. A better state of mind in

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which to find yourself,
however, is a state of
contentment. Paul the
apostle knew a lot about
unpleasant life
experiences. He was
stoned, shipwrecked,
imprisoned, and ridiculed
for the sake of the
gospel. But here is what
he says about his inner
contentment. "I am
saying this because I am
in need, for I have
learned to be content

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whatever the
circumstances. I know
what it is to be in need,
and I know what it is to
have plenty. I have
learned the secret of
being content in any and
every situation, whether
well fed or hungry,
whether living in plenty or
in want. I can do
everything through him
who gives me strength.”
Philippians 4:11-13, NIV.
Life may not have been

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much fun for the apostle Paul at times, but he found continual contentment through being “in Christ.” His happiness and contentment was not dependent upon circumstances, because he lived above them.

6. Talk out your problems and frustrations; establish a support system with

those around you.


You and I are all social creatures and therefore are in need of one another for sympathy, encouragement, advice, and self-improvement.

You cannot shut yourselves up in isolation and then expect to have a fulfilling existence. A large part of your meaning in life is derived from human


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relationships. Emotional well-being and stability is also dependent upon the healthy interaction with others.


Perhaps the most important social system to which you belong is the family. It is from the family that you learned so much about life in your early years. Most adults also belong to a family in which they have

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a spouse and children.
You should be able to expect much love and support from your family if it is based upon sound, Christian principles. In addition, you form a network of friends throughout your life. Some of these friendship bonds are long-term, while others last only a few months, or at the most a couple of years. Often the bond of


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friendship established
with others evaporates
when one moves to a
different' locale. For the
Christian, the church
provides a quality of
fellowship and friendship,
which is difficult for
others to understand.
The church is a special
family-the family of God.
It is, or should be, a
caring community of love
and support. Along with
all of the above, social

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systems of support are formed among those one works with. These include relationships with supervisors, subordinates, colleagues, and clients.


If the relationships with those with whom you work, play, worship, and live with are not satisfactory, then you will have a greater tendency to burn out and find life to

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be miserable. By the same token, a caring group or network of individuals can be of invaluable help to someone who has been experiencing symptoms of burnout. Help from other people is a coping strategy which is often overlooked, mainly because one is naturally reluctant to expose his or her weaknesses and inadequacies to others.

They do not want to appear vulnerable. However, they rob themselves of much help in life because of this attitude.

Social support systems have been defined by Gerald Caplan as “enduring interpersonal ties to groups of people who can be relied upon to provide emotional sustenance, assistance,


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and resources in times of need, who provide feedback, and who share standards and values.”

They are “the people who support an individual through crises and calm and with whom feelings can be shared without condemnation.”

Three important functions can be accomplished by the different people who operate as one's social support group. These functions are as follows:


1. Listening. You need those who are willing to listen with sympathy and understanding. Often a listener functions best when he is doing only that, without giving



advice or making value judgments. At times you may become frustrated, and you are in great need of someone who will listen as you “let off a little steam.”


2. Technical appreciation and challenge.

You need someone in your particular profession or same type of work who can express

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appreciation of the work you are doing. Affirmation for a job well done is important. At the same time, it is vital that you have persons in your line of work who can critique your performance on the job and show you ways in which you can improve.


In this way your work will not grow stale or superficial.

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It should be noted here that this appreciation and challenge to a worker can be done only by someone who knows about the certain field of endeavour. Also, it should be done by somebody whom you consider to be honest and trustworthy.


3. Emotional support and challenge.

While a wife may not be able to give her husband much technical appreciation and challenge, she can give him a lot of emotional support. This means that she will stand by his side and support him, even if she does not always agree with everything he does. In fact, emotional


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support is extremely important for the wife to provide if the husband does not receive it on the job (as is often the case). As every husband knows, the relationship is quite reciprocal; the wife needs much emotional support, too, whether she works outside the home or not.


The other side of support is emotional

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challenge. There are times when. you need to be confronted with your excuses and self-deceptions; someone must tell it “like it is.” Many times the one friend who will do this is a greater friend than the one who will just merely listen to you.

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The social support system established with those around you can be very valuable. This system, though, does not have to de-generate into a constant 'gripping session or crying time. You should not expect to receive continual technical appreciation on the job and never be challenged to do better. Your social support system, however, should

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help you to see life from a clearer viewpoint than if you did not interact with anyone at all. These persons should cause you to be honest with yourselves. And as you feel yourself pulling out of the burnout state, you should seek to make yourself available to others who need your help in the different areas outlined above. There are others of your

acquaintance who are going through the same frustrations and problems you have encountered.


Give to them the benefit of your experience; give them a helping hand.

This is one of the underlying principles of such groups as Alcoholics Anonymous.

7. For those in the helping professions:
Seek to have an attitude


of “detached concern”
toward those you help.

In many helping professions, the helper is often adversely affected by his contact with those he is trying to serve. This is true especially in situations in which the helper is continually confronted with hopeless or seemingly impossible situations. Human problems cannot be


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solved in the same way that mechanical or technical problems can, and this causes a high level of stress to exist in the helper.

Perhaps the most extreme example of this is the nurse who works with terminal cancer patients. When nurses first begin to work in the hospital with these patients, the tendency is

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to get emotionally involved with the patients and their tragic experience. Most nurses truly care about people, but people keep on dying. It is a truly hopeless situation. Nurses, without even realising it, begin protecting themselves from being overwhelmed by the environment in which they serve. They pull away emotionally

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from the patients. Their detachment can be exhibited in several ways: resentment against the demands of the cancer victims; a kind of sick humour in which they mock the ones they care for; a false facade of valour which masks their feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and resentment. Needless to say, the burnout rate among nurses in such

situations is quite high.

Emotional detachment from the problems of people can also occur among such helpers as pastors, counsellors, and teachers. Sometimes the problems which people get themselves into are so strange and unnecessary that the natural tendency is to shake one's head and walk away.


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People's confused lives and life situations appear almost humorous at times, if we forget that they are indeed very tragic. We pray for and with these individuals and claim the promises that God is able to work miracles. However, the months and years pass, and these people refuse to co-operate with divine help. They are still the same unchanged, mixed-


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up people they have
always been. As
someone said to me
several years ago about
a certain family: “Helping
them is about as easy as
unscrambling scrambled
eggs!”

Teachers really want to
see their students learn
and get excited about the
quest for knowledge.
However, when Freddie
and Florence refuse to

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do their homework and these children's parents do not seem to care either, what can the teacher do? The teacher has the choice of getting emotionally distraught about the apathy around him/her, or he can pull back, distance himself somewhat from the less-than-ideal situation, and do his best. That teacher must assume the attitude of 'detached concern.'

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This is a balance which can be difficult to maintain. A professional helper must preserve a certain objectivity and detachment from those he or she wants to help. At the same time, he must demonstrate to the one being helped that he does care. He must show he is sensitive to the needs of those within his sphere of care and that he is concerned about


their welfare. In attempting to practice detached concern, the professional helper fights dangers on both ends of the spectrum.

You can become overly involved in the situation and lose your objectivity.

As one clinical psychologist so aptly described this danger: "Once you are in the shoes of your patient,

you cannot be of any help. He has been in his shoes all along, and obviously has not done too well.”


The opposite danger is complete detachment, which is characterised by a total loss of concern and a dehumanising attitude. If you are too detached, you also cannot be of any help to

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anyone. Therefore, a proper balance of caring and detachment must be established and maintained.¹² Keeping these two factors in balance will lengthen your longevity as a helping professional and will keep your own personal life happier and more emotionally satisfying.

8. Stay away from false cures for dystress.

Some solutions to burnout are not really solutions at all. The “cure” turns out to be worse than the disease itself. You can use many diversions and decoys, even self-destructive activities to mask your pain and help you forget. Do you cover up and


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camouflage, rather than reach out for a genuine cure? For a while you may feel better, but then you realise that your feelings of hopelessness and exhaustion remain. The false cures, if anything, have only made the burnout worse. Therefore, stay away from cures to distress which cover up rather than get to the heart of the problem. Do not seek

their help.


9. Determine that limit to which you can be loaded down with work and responsibility; do not let yourself go beyond that limit.

Remember the example of the camel. This seemingly clumsy and homely creature is actually quite smart in one respect: he will carry a heavy burden, but he

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reaches a limit past
which he refuses to go.
His owner may try to
sneak an added weight
onto what the camel
presently is carrying, but
that only makes the
camel balk and proclaim
a sit-down strike until the
burden is removed.


Many of us are not as
smart as the camel. We
have not yet learned
what our “load limit” is.




Despite our energetic natures, we are like the disciples: the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Our physical and emotional stamina does not equal our ambitious, go-getter spirit. We continue to accept responsibilities and projects which others are anxious to hand to us.


Determining the limit of

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your work responsibilities and assignments is a personal matter; no one can make that determination for you. A few seem able to do this, and the results are disastrous if we try. We should not let the “workaholics” of the world make us feel guilty when we set limits to our work schedules and our activities.

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Of course, the difficulty of putting this good advice into practice is that for most people, work responsibilities are imposed upon them from an external, higher source (simply speaking, the boss). Often we receive the ultimatum, “Do this - or else.” In such situations, try adapting yourself to a heavier work load. Give yourself time to discover


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whether you can handle more or not. Or, positively yet firmly, stand up for your rights as a worker. Tell the employer you do not think you can handle a heavier load than what you are presently carrying. If the load is too heavy for you to bear, then begin looking for other employment. Always keep this in mind: No job is worth sacrificing your




physical and emotional health in order to hold it.

Your load limit also should take into consideration your church and social life. You can be loaded down with too many heavy burdens even in these areas of life. The only difference here is that you have more latitude to say No than on the job. Of course, you should


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always be ready and willing to serve the Lord and your fellowman.

However, your church life should never get to the point where it is viewed as another burdensome job to perform. Many have discovered that if they show a willingness to serve in the church, then a cascade of jobs and offices will come showering down upon them. This is especially

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true in smaller churches where often there are only one or two “church pillars” who are holding things together. Even in your church life, it is important to set a limit to your responsibilities and activities. You will then be able to perform your tasks with greater skill and cheerfulness.



10. Disengage yourself from the working environment when you leave it.


When you leave your work setting, really leave it, both physically and mentally. Don't bring a briefcase full of work home with you to labour over until midnight.

Occasionally you may be forced into doing this, but you should make it a rare




exception. Instead of bringing your job home with you, spend some quality time with your family; have fun together.

Some professionals have a problem with this coping principle because their work tends to infiltrate their total lifestyle. Two good examples are physicians and ministers. Generally, they are expected to be


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“on call” and be available when they are needed. In a very real sense, my work as a counsellor touched practically all of my life. It was not possible to fit this work into a neat eight-to-five time slot. If you find yourself in a similar situation, you must creatively find ways to disengage yourself from the work environment. Seek to have one day a

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week where you can get your mind off that work completely. Deal with emergencies on that day, but nothing else.

Consciously lay aside hours during the day for recreational activities and rest. If you don't, then your work will tend to overpower you. When I ran a counselling practice which called upon my time most evenings, I used to make


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a date during the day
with my wife every
Wednesday and we
would do fun things
together totally unrelated
to my work schedule.


Whatever you choose to
do, make sure you do not
allow your-self to work all
of your waking hours. By
doing that you are
cheating yourself and
your family. If you are not
burned-out yet, such a

schedule will cause you to be that way soon.


Years ago I worked in a nursing environment at a Psychiatric Hospital. And I was coming close to becoming a patient myself, had it not been for some advice given to me by a senior male nurse. Now I love stories, and when he gave me some advice by telling a story. I remembered and

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applied that advice. And I have been grateful ever since. Once upon a time a certain man had the neighbours bewildered by a certain behaviour every morning and evening. Many watched him as he walked up his driveway and seemed to do something as he stopped at a tree in his front yard. They thought he put something in the tree each day but when

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they secretly looked after he had gone inside, they saw nothing. Those who assumed he took something from the tree into the house each night and returned it in the morning eagerly looked there after he left for work in the mornings. One day their curiosity could be contained no longer and one brave soul ventured to ask him what he was doing. Oh,


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that's my worry tree.
Every night I come home from work with all my work relate worries and I leave them on the tree. I gather them again the next morning and take them back to work. That way my family doesn't have to wear them and I can sleep peacefully. Now you don't need an actual tree. When I was nursing, I used to tell myself that when I took


off my uniform, the worries stayed at work. When I had a counselling practice I left my worries in the clinic. Nowadays I have a secretary to give me the day's worries when I get to the office!

11. Socialise with people outside your immediate work environment.

If you are a mechanic and all of your friends are

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mechanics, what do you think you will talk about when you all get together at a party or picnic? You guess it: mechanics! This is not to say that socialising with colleagues will necessarily promote dystress. As we learned earlier about support groups, it is important for peers who work together to compare notes, listen, give each other


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appreciation and advice,
and perform other
supportive functions.
However, shop-talk can
be stressful if it is always
carried into the social
arena. Make friends with
people who are not a part
of your work routine.
Their social relationships
with you will broaden
your interests, and at the
same time you will be
able to get your mind off
the problems and


challenges you face at work.

12. Utilise time management principles in governing your life.

The great evangelist Fordyce M. Detamore had a valuable motto which he lived by: "Wasted Time Is Wasted Life." He taught it verbally and through experience




to the ministers and other gospel workers who worked with him in his crusades. During his evangelistic work he would visit a large number of homes each day. His energy and dedication was a constant source of inspiration (and amazement!) to those who laboured by his side. His ability to wisely use time is probably one of




the keys to his successful career as an evangelist.

Time is certainly the stuff which life is made of. We all have been given the same amount of time in a day, no more and no less. If we waste a day, a week, a month, or a year, it can never be reclaimed. The wasting of time sets a pattern of chronic underachievement, a


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pattern which is difficult to break. A friend of stress research author Timothy Ponder gave an appraisal of one of his employees. It was exaggerated for the sake of humour, but it still had an element of truth: "That fellow gets to work at eleven, leaves at one, and takes an hour off for lunch."

The problem a lot of


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people have is not
laziness. It is lack of
organisation. They
accomplish little because
they do not know how to
use time in an efficient
way. They waste time
constantly, while
believing they are busy.
They tell others how
rushed they are, but they
have very little to show
for their work, and this
places them under much
pressure. What many fail


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to realise is that wasting time and underachieving produces stress in conscientious people to the same extent as the work required for overachievement does.

The overachieving person (the prime target for a burnout) tries to accomplish too much in too short a period of time. This person needs to adopt as his own motto

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“Put off till tomorrow
some of the things which
could be done today.”
Understanding how to set
up a daily order of
priorities with the use of a
list will do much to
liberate the overachiever
from the work habits he
or she has developed.
Time management
principles, therefore, will
organise the
disorganised person and



retain the sanity of the overachiever. Space is limited, so it will not be possible to present an in-depth study of these principles.

Here are the “Ten Commandments of Time Management” adapted from a newsletter sent to sales representatives:

I. Analyse Your Time Use and Schedule It.
Keep track of how you

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spend (and waste) time during the course a week; then use a daily planning book to schedule your time in the most effective manner for your lifestyle. In your book each day, establish a list of priorities of things to do that day. Do the most important things first, then the items of lesser importance.

II. Concentrate.

Concentrate on doing one thing at a time, without jumping from one task to the other.

III. Take Breaks Away From Business.

Recreation and family activities should have a place in your time schedule; these will clear your mind so that you will be able to concentrate better when you get back

“down to business.”

IV Avoid Clutter. This applies to both the office and the time schedule! Do not try to schedule too much into a certain period of time.

V. Don't Be a Perfectionist. We should try to do our best, but remember that striving for perfection in our work is exhausting and wastes a lot of time.

VI. Learn to Say No.


Learning to use this simple, short word is a great timesaver. It keeps you from doing things you don't want to do or don't have time to do.

VII. Don't

Procrastinate. The longer you wait to accomplish an important, necessary task, the more difficult it will typically be for you.

VIII. Eliminate the Enjoyable Time-wasting Activities. The things we enjoy doing are often the reasons why we are kept from accomplishing something productive. This can also apply to “time robbers” - things not so enjoyable, but distracting anyway.

IX. Learn to Delegate. We are tempted to think we’re the only ones who

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can do anything right. If we have this attitude, we will head toward energetic self-destruction; we will try to do everything ourselves. It is much better to teach others to do certain tasks so that we can be freed of having to do them.


X. Be Perceptive and Flexible. Don't make your schedule too rigid. Let changes occur whenever

they are appropriate.

Quite often, the needs of others must come before our well-planned schedules.


13. Fight “Hurry-itis”

“Hurry-itis” occurs when you seek to schedule too much into a set period of time. Since time is inflexible, the only thing which changes is the speed of our activity. You

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give others the impression you are rushed and busy, because you are. They mention the fact that you are real “go-getters.” However, your non-stop rushing around leads you finally into a dead-end street of exhaustion.

I mention “Hurry-itis” because it is a tendency which I am constantly fighting. I wish I were the

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only one, but the motorways and footpaths of our land reveal otherwise. There are many people hurrying to meetings which all began ten minutes ago.

Does this happen to you on a regular basis? Do you find yourself rushing to every engagement, only to find yourself late to about half of them? If so, then you have a habit

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on your hands which you need to break. You bring unnecessary pressure upon yourselves by cramming your schedules too full.

The next time you are scheduled to go somewhere to meet an individual or group of people, ask yourself these questions: Have I allowed myself enough time to get there without




any undue pressure?
What do I intend to do during the several hours before the meeting? Will it conflict with my later responsibility? If you ask these questions, it will help you tremendously. This may seem like a simple remedy, but it is an important one. “Hurry-itis” is one of the sparks which ignite a stressful life-style and leads a person

eventually to feeling
burned-out.


**14. Realise the
shortcomings and
weaknesses within
yourself and others.**

Seek to hold down the
perfectionist and idealist
within yourself

An idealistic person is
often a hostile and
restless one. He knows
the way things ought to
be, or at least he thinks


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he knows. He wants others to conform to his ideal picture of the world and gets angry when they don't. Burned-out persons usually are idealists when they enter their professions. They start out with great hopes of changing the world. After a while they begin to realise that their environment is more resistant to change than they had dreamed.

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Certainly, idealism is a virtue if channelled in the right direction. The only problem is that the average work environment is far from ideal, and can be very frustrating at times.


Idealism in young people is often reinforced by the academic world, which teaches students the way things should be in their chosen field of

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study. When they get out of school and into a job, they realise that the ideal set before them in college is not the way things actually are. Dr. Freudenberger in his book gives this example of a young lawyer who expects a precise world of theory and clear-cut precedents, but finds himself coping with shortcuts and expedients that were not in any of

his legal textbooks. “He also finds himself dealing with confused, angry clients who want results and are not particularly interested in the ramifications of the law.”

The perfectionist is a close cousin of the *idealist*. This person works and works to get every aspect of his work and life just right, with absolutely no mistakes. A

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secretary will retype a letter if a typographical error is made or a student will drop out of a college class if the possibility of making a “B” exists. A perfectionist does not allow for mistakes and failures, either in himself or in others. When these shortcomings make themselves evident, this type of person is beside himself. He, too, gets


frustrated very easily.

Clyde Narramore

describes him as “a busy bee who buzzes himself to distraction.”

You need to establish a standard of excellence and achievement for yourself. Do not be content with mediocrity.


At the same time, remember you are in an imperfect world filled with imperfect and sometimes



hard-headed people.
They have weaknesses
and shortcomings, and
so do you. It sometimes
pays not to take your-self
too seriously.

**15. Get adequate
amounts of exercise
and recreation.**


Many positive results
come from a consistent
exercise/ recreation



program. One result not often mentioned is in the area of stress management. Exercise reduces the harmful effects of life's stresses and pressures. If stress is successfully managed in one's life, then burnout is less likely to occur. Since this is the subject of the next chapter, I point your attention there.


16. Be nice to yourself: seek to maintain your health by following other established health principles. Pay particular attention to sleep and proper diet.

The large majority of the population would feel “wiped out” and unable to function if they went for several weeks or months getting only three or four hours of sleep each

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night. It does not matter if they followed every other coping strategy in this or any other book. The simple truth is that everyone needs a certain amount of sleep. If you find yourself in the burned-out state, it may be because you are burning your candle at both ends!

Sleep repairs and restores the body. It

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helps conserve vitality so that you can awake refreshed. One author has stated it this way: "Sleep, nature's sweet restorer, invigorates the tired body and prepares it for the next day's duties."

In fact we should pay attention to all eight of the natural remedies: "Pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the

use of water, trust in divine power-these are the true remedies.

These laws of good health are as relevant today as when they were first outlined almost 100 years ago in a little book by E G White called *The Ministry of Healing*.


Perhaps they are even more applicable, considering the intemperance and less-

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than-desirable dietary habits of so many Australians. Whether you realise it or not, your health has a tremendous bearing upon how you are able to relate to the pressures and stresses of life.


Clyde Narramore, in his book *How to Handle Pressure*, gives this dynamic illustration:

“The weight of pressure

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is not only judged by the size of the load but by the strength of the one who bears it.

A heavy crate can be carried by a large truck with ease, but that same crate when placed upon a child's wagon will crush it. The weaker wagon cannot sustain the heavy weight of pressure that is placed upon it. So it is with your physical well-

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being. When you suffer from poor health, you are overwhelmed by pressures that are not even considered as such by others who enjoy vibrant health....


People need stimulation in order to find motivation. Yet, when you're in a fragile physical state, any task demanding initiative becomes a stressful

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situation. Responsibility takes on the dimension of pressure. It doesn't take much to throw on the panic switch or cause you to crumble."

17. Seek to consolidate the "real you" with the image or facade which everyone sees you to be.


This may seem like an abstract concept at first, but it is really important to understand. It is not

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unusual for individuals to project an image of themselves to the outside world which is quite different from what they are really like on the inside. People often play a role which they feel others expect from them. There are those who even set professional goals this way; they study to be-come a physician or lawyer because their father or


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some other family member has stereotyped them into this area. In reality, their interests lie in other fields of study. People hunger for approval from others, so they will erect false images and set false goals for themselves which they hope will be pleasing to everyone. At the same time, their “authentic self” keeps quiet. The moment of

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truth comes at some point, however; one's true self will be manifested. The person declares that he is tired of being a hypocrite and a phoney. He just wants to be himself. This honesty usually does not manifest itself until a person has gone through a severe, trying crisis in his life.

Of course, the image


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which you establish and
which others see each
day might actually be
closer to the divine
likeness than your true
self. Your true, inner self
might be almost totally
opposed to God's will for
you. What is important to
note is that this
dichotomy is destructive.
Leading a double life
never works.
Shakespeare wrote in
Hamlet, "To thine own


self be true.” A basic honesty with ourselves and with those around us will prevent us from erecting a phony exterior which hides a totally different self inside.

18. Develop emotional closeness with “significant others” in your life.

Usually, there is a small circle of friends and family members whom

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you are able to particularly depend upon for emotional support when the going gets rough. You need them in normal times, of course, but their value to your life is magnified during dark, depressing periods. The individuals in support groups, at work, among friends, and at church often give us much help, but you should not attempt to develop an

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emotional bond with everyone you turn. to for general encouragement and support. Only a few key individuals known in the psychological literature as “significant others,” should share your innermost thoughts and feelings. It is with these persons that you should develop true emotional closeness. These often include a parent, one’s spouse, a


best friend or two, or a trusted advisor.

Of those in this list, your husband or wife should be the one with whom you develop the most emotional closeness and with whom you share the most intimate confidences. (Also, remember that confidences about one's home-life should not go outside the family circle.)

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The irony of all this is that many times you are emotionally distant from the ones with whom you should be the closest.

Two major reasons exist for this dilemma: First, you are too afraid or too inhibited to tell your spouse how you truly feel, so you engage in much superficial conversation. Second, you never actively listen to what others are saying


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to you. Instead, you are only thinking up your response to their comments. If emotional closeness with those important people in your life is needed to keep you from burning out, then you should seek to tear down any and every barrier that would keep you from that closeness.

19. Spend time with yourself to reflect and think.




While it is important to spend time with our families and close friends, you must not forget that you should seek time alone with yourself for tranquil, quiet reflection. Amid all of the activities of our lives, this is probably a rare occurrence. You are around other people so much of the time in meetings, social occasions, and on the

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job itself. You reach a point where you grow weary of being around people. Some may disagree, but I believe it is vital on occasion to even get away for a few hours or a day from the spouse and the children so that you might think-alone. When was the last time you did something all by yourself, something you enjoy doing? It probably has been quite

awhile.

Do you run away from thinking and self-reflection when you get all by yourself? Being alone may actually intimidate some. So what do you do? You flip through magazines and newspapers; you watch inane television programs; you keep busy with household chores. You do anything except



come face-to-face with yourself. I have caught myself listening to the radio or work-related cassettes constantly while travelling on long trips by myself. It sometimes did not matter what it was, just so it was something to listen to and absorb my thoughts. I've discovered that this is a form of running away from myself. Therefore, I leave the radio off during



portions of these trips so that I can commune with myself, as well as with the Lord. I seek to cultivate the quality of “aloneness.”

Dag Hammarskjold once wrote:


“The longest journey is the journey inwards.” He knew what he was talking about.

20. Get in touch with the

source of lasting peace and strength.

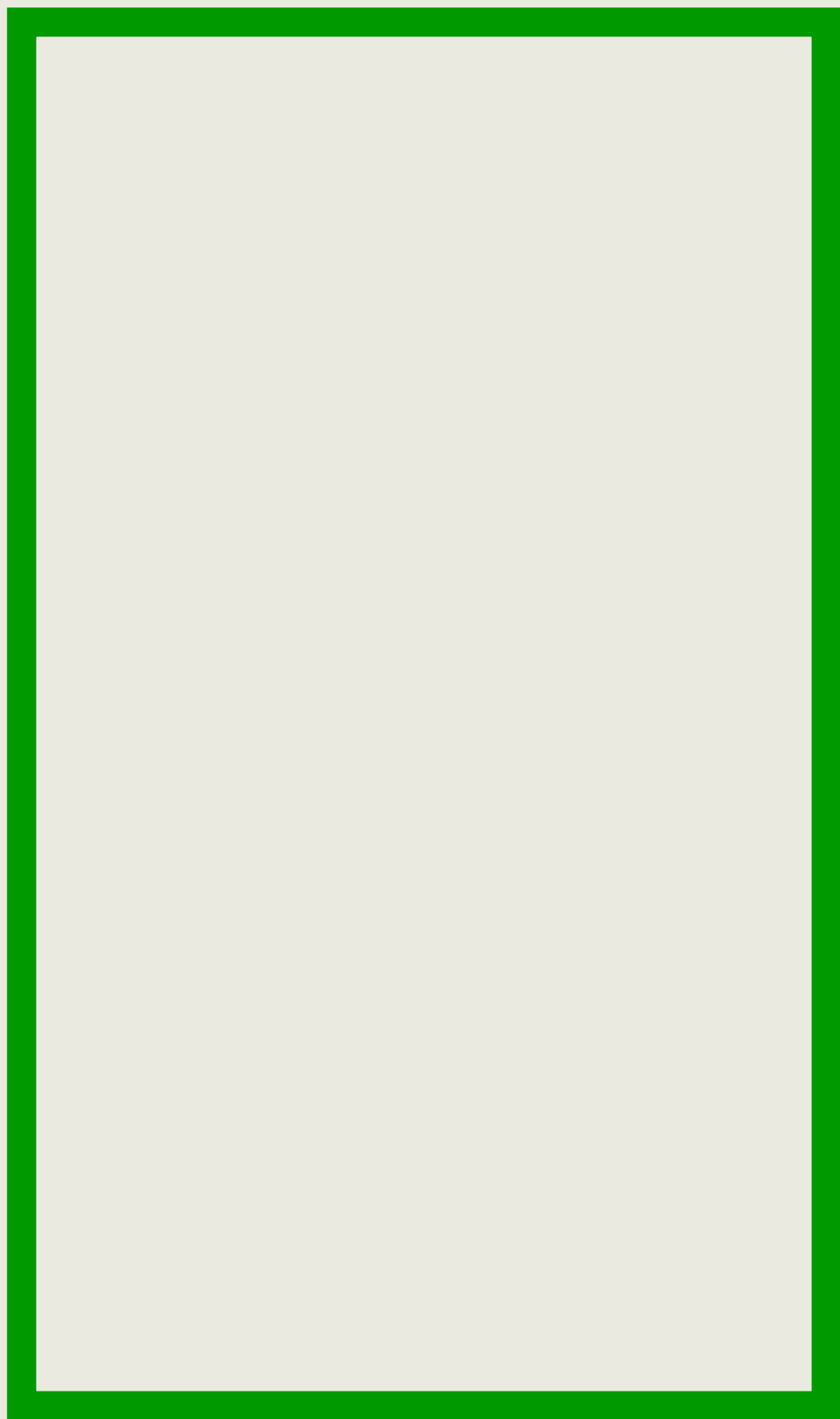
The Lord tells us in His Word, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." John 15:5.

These words are all-inclusive. There is no room for any doubt as to what Jesus means. He

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does not say, “You can do without Me on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons” or “You can find fulfilment apart from My presence during April and May.” He states simply, “Without me ye can do nothing.”


There is an old Negro spiritual which says, “If we ever needed the Lord before, we sure do need Him now!”




Stress
Dystress & Distress
with Dr Lionel Hartley

2

Who is your speaker for today?




Lionel Hartley, author, radio broadcaster, public speaker and retired sociologist. He was a Lifestyle Educator and Family-life Counsellor for three decades. He is a grandparent, married to Rosemary with three grown children.



Lionel D C Hartley, DipAdmin(NZIM), HonDip (DramArt), DipTheol (SDB), RGN (Psy, PsyPaed, Admin, Nutn), Dip Bus Law, Dip Econ, Dip Accy, BA (Lit), MA, PhD [etc.]
www.hartleyonline.blogspot.com


**We welcome your participation in today's seminar.
Time will be allowed at the end for your questions.**

3




Stress Management...

Nine-year-old Peter Blank's story...



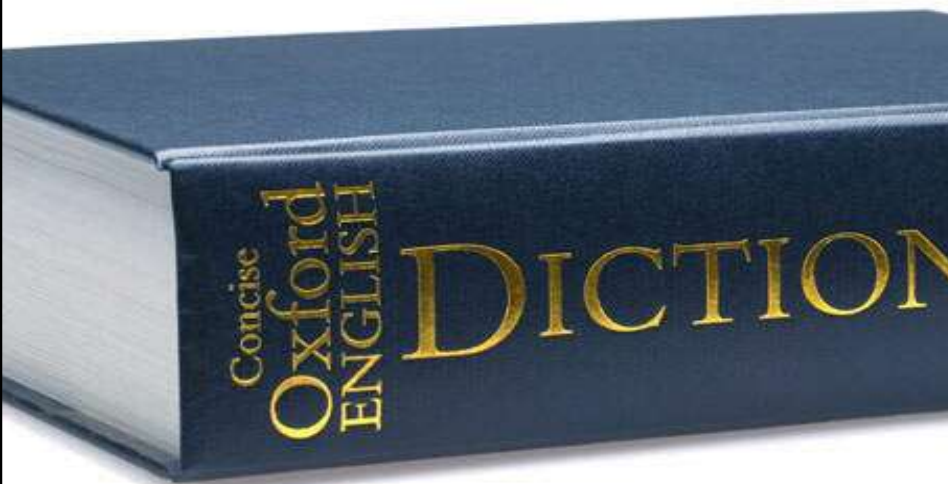
A cartoon illustration of a clown with a colorful outfit and a large, multi-colored balloon. The clown is smiling and holding the balloon. In the bottom right corner, there is a cartoon illustration of a boy with a sad expression, looking down at a large, grey, cloud-like shape that appears to be covering his face or a desk.

4




Stress:

A strain or demand on physical or mental energy



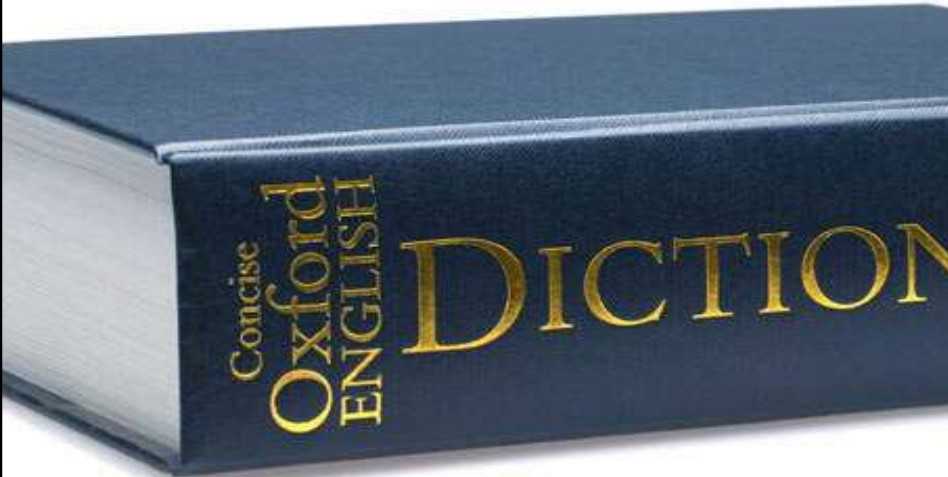
A photograph of a dark blue, leather-bound book. The spine of the book is visible, and the text "Concise Oxford ENGLISH DICTIONARY" is printed in gold lettering. The word "DICTIONARY" is the largest and most prominent.

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Distress:

Severe pain, sorrow, anguish, breathlessness, exhaustion; affliction, anxiety




Concise
**Oxford
ENGLISH** **DICTION**

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Coping with Stress & Distress



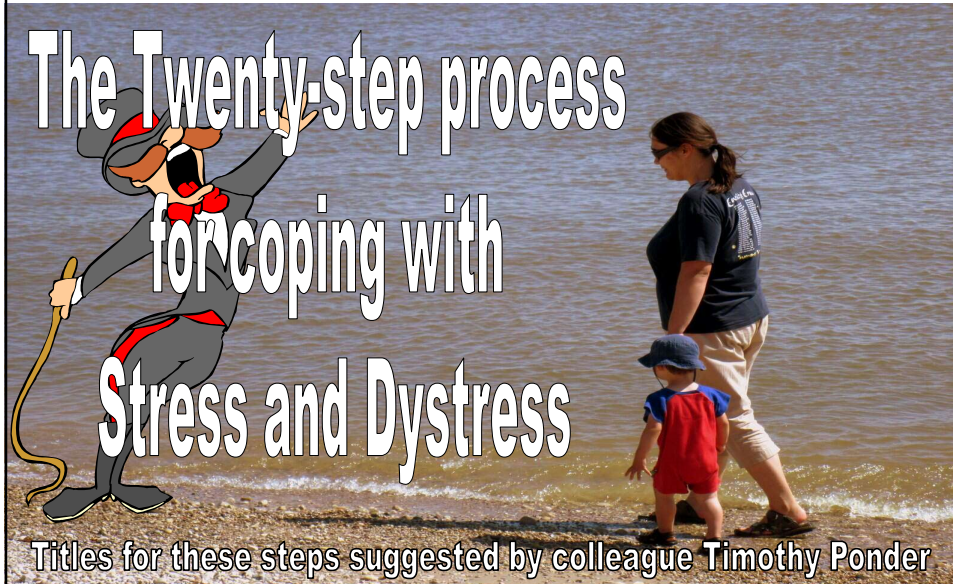
Stress
Distress
Dystress
Eustress

7




Coping with Stress & Dystress

The Twenty-step process for coping with Stress and Dystress



Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder


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Coping with Stress & Dystress


Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder

1. Review your philosophy of life



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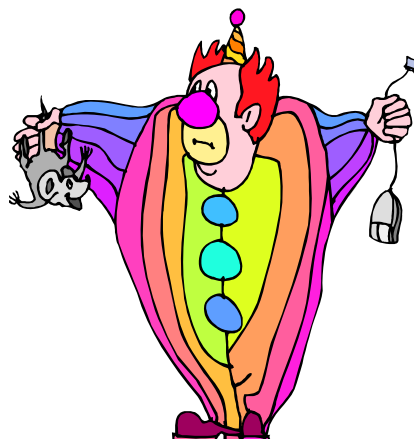
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Coping with Stress & Dystress

Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder


2. Be aware that you may be going through a major crisis in your life



**“We can run,
but we can’t hide”**

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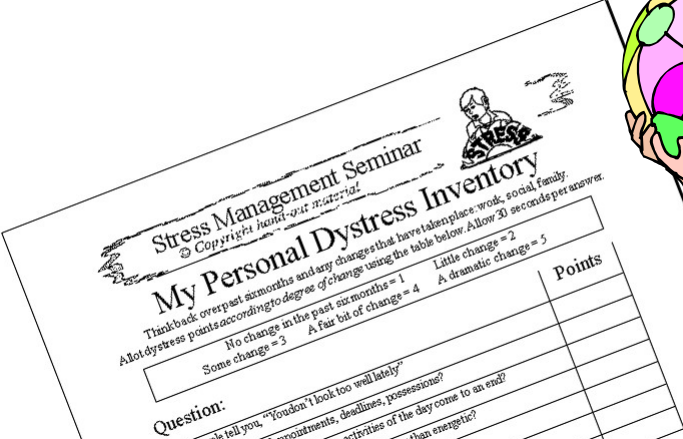
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Coping with Stress & Dystress

Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder

3. Analyse which life events are causing you to feel stressful or dystressed

Stress Management Seminar
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My Personal Dystress Inventory

Think back over past six months and any changes that have taken place: work, social, family. Allot dystress points according to degree of change using the table below. Allow 30 seconds per answer.


No change in the past six months = 1	Little change = 2
Some change = 3	A dramatic change = 5
A far bit of change = 4	

Question:

“You don’t look too well lately”	Points
“You don’t seem to have any appointments, deadlines, possessions?”	
“You don’t seem to have any activities of the day come to an end?”	
“You don’t seem to have any energy?”	

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Daily Stressors

Work Related (47% of all daily stressors)

- 1. Monotonous, repetitive tasks
- 2. Work-related meetings
- 3. Daily deadline pressure
- 4. A discussion with the boss
- 5. Work-related phone calls



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Daily Stressors


Friendships (14% of all daily stressors)

- 1. Argument with opposite sex
- 2. Waiting for a friend who is late
- 3. Anger over an interpersonal event
- 4. Arguments with friends
- 5. Socializing with a group of friends



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Daily Stressors


Home responsibilities (10% of all daily stressors)

- 1. Doing housework after a full day's work
- 2. Shopping
- 3. Machinery not working
- 4. Short-run financial concerns
-



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Daily Stressors


Travelling (9% of all daily stressors)

- 1. Riding the bus, train, or subway
- 2. Transportation delay on either side of a commute
- 3. Driving a car
- 4. Rushing to be somewhere on time
- 5. Being stuck in a traffic jam
-



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Daily Stressors


Educational (7% of all daily stressors)

- 1. Being in class
- 2. Studying, reading, etc.
- 3. Taking a test
- 4. Asking questions in class
- 5. Teaching others in a class
-



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Daily Stressors


Family (5% of all daily stressors)

- 1. Visiting relatives
- 2. Worrying about an offspring
- 3. Caring for an offspring after work
- 4. Argument with your spouse
- 5. Scolding an offspring



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Daily Stressors

Miscellaneous (8% of all daily stressors)


- 1. Insomnia for 30 minutes or less due to your thinking about the day's activities.
- 2. Going to the doctor or dentist
- 3. Being alone and feeling lonely

*Daily Stressors," is taken from the Book of Health,
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Coping with Stress & Dystress

Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder

4. Consider changing parts of your life which bring you dystress.



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My Personal Stress Inventory


Fill in your day, hour by hour. Allot stress points according to the table below.

Enjoyable = 1	Challenging = 2	Relaxing = 3	Pleasant routine = 4	Uninviting = 5
Bored = 6	Unpleasant routine = 7	Stressed = 8	Overstressed = 9	Breaking point = 10

Time	Activity	Points

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Coping with Stress & Dystress

Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder


5. Learn to accept what you cannot change about your life and work

The "Serenity Prayer"

"God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference."

(Attributed to St Francis of Assisi, Reinhold Niebuhr, and others)

"cognitive clarity"



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Coping with Stress & Dystress

Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder

6. Talk out your problems and frustrations; establish a support system with those around you.

Three functions of Social Support:

- 1. Listening**
- 2. Technical appreciation and challenge**
- 3. Emotional support and challenge**



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Coping with Stress & Dystress

Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder

7. Seek to have an attitude of “detached concern” toward those you help.

“Once you are in the shoes of your patient, you cannot be of any help. He has been in his shoes all along, and obviously has not done too well.”



The opposite danger is complete detachment

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Coping with Stress & Dystress

Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder

8. Stay away from false cures for dystress.



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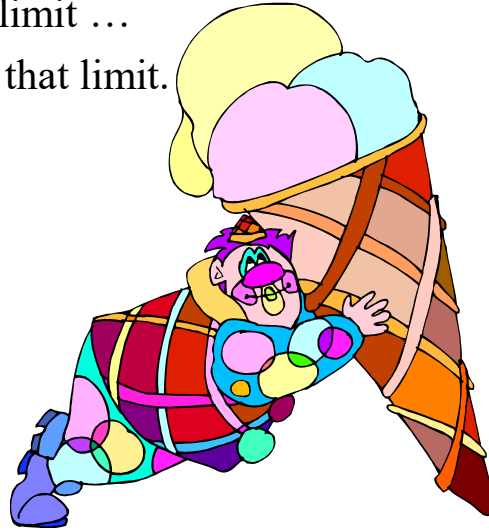
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Coping with Stress & Dystress

Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder

9. Determine your limit ...
do not go beyond that limit.



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Coping with Stress & Dystress


Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder

10. Disengage yourself from the working
environment when you leave it.




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 **Coping with Stress & Dystress**
Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder

11. Socialise with people outside your immediate work environment.




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 **Coping with Stress & Dystress**
Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder

12. Utilise time management principles in governing your life



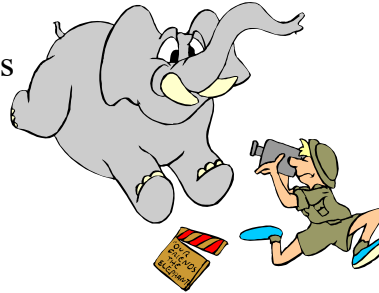
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Ten Commandments of Time Management

- I. Analyse Your Time Use and Schedule It
- II. Concentrate
- III. Take Breaks Away From Business
- IV. Avoid Clutter
- V. Don't Be a Perfectionist.
- VI. Learn to Say No
- VII. Don't Procrastinate
- VIII. Eliminate the Enjoyable Time-wasting Activities
- IX. Learn to Delegate
- X. Be Perceptive and Flexible



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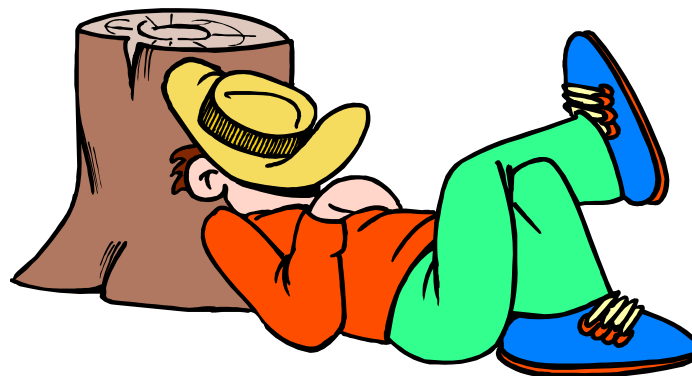
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Coping with Stress & Dystress

Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder


13. Fight "Hurry-itis"



"The hurrier I go the behinder I get."


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 **Coping with Stress & Dystress**
Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder

14. Realise the shortcomings and weaknesses within yourself and others.


The Idealist



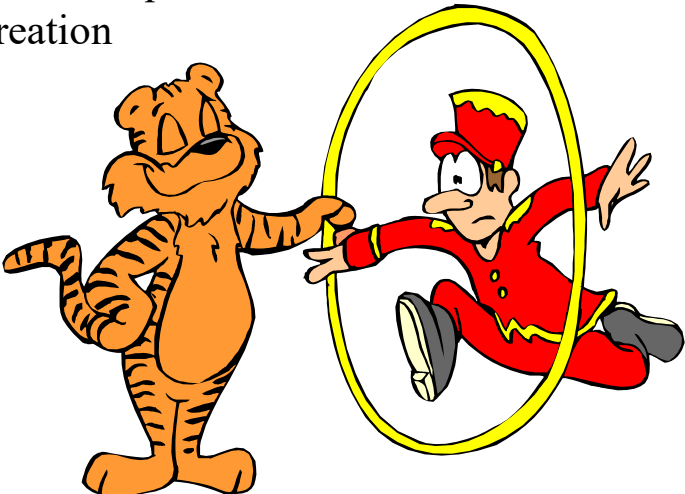
The Perfectionist

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 **Coping with Stress & Dystress**
Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder

15. Get adequate amounts of exercise and recreation




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 **Coping with Stress & Dystress**
Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder


16. Be nice to yourself: seek to maintain your health especially sleep and proper diet

“The weight of pressure is not only judged by the size of the load but by the strength of the one who bears it.”
– Clyde Narramore




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 **Coping with Stress & Dystress**
Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder

18. Develop emotional closeness with “significant others” in your life



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 **Coping with Stress & Dystress**
Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder

19. Spend time with yourself to reflect and think

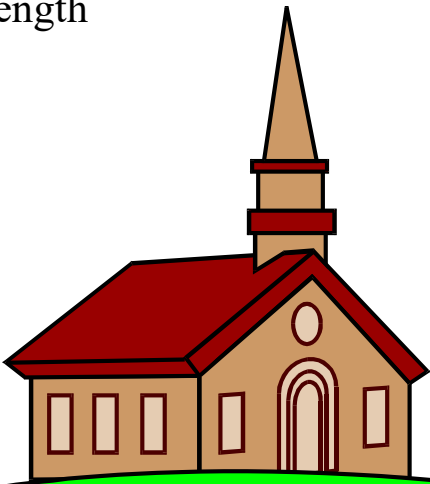


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 **Coping with Stress & Dystress**
Titles for these steps suggested by colleague Timothy Ponder

20. Get in touch with the source of lasting peace and strength



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101 WAYS TO COPE WITH STRESS

101 WAYS TO COPE WITH STRESS

1. Get up 15 minutes earlier
 2. Prepare for the morning the night before
 3. Avoid tight fitting clothes
 4. Avoid relying on chemical aids
 5. Set appointments ahead
 6. Don't rely on your memory ... write it down
 7. Practice preventive maintenance
 8. Make duplicate keys
 9. Say "no" more often
 10. Set priorities in your life
 11. Avoid negative people
 12. Use time wisely
 13. Simplify meal times
 14. Always make copies of important papers
 15. Anticipate your needs
 16. Repair anything that doesn't work properly
 17. Ask for help with the jobs you dislike
 18. Break large tasks into bite size portions
 19. Look at problems as challenges
 20. Look at challenges differently
 21. Unclutter your life
 22. Smile
 23. Be prepared for rain
 24. Tickle a baby
 25. Pet a friendly dog/cat
 26. Don't know all the answers
 27. Look for a silver lining
 28. Say something nice to someone
 29. Teach a kid to fly a kite
 30. Walk in the rain
 31. Schedule play time into every day
 32. Take a bubble bath
 33. Be aware of the decisions you make
 34. Believe in yourself
 35. Stop saying negative things to yourself
 36. Visualize yourself winning
 37. Develop your sense of humor
 38. Stop thinking tomorrow will be a better today
 39. Have goals for yourself
 40. Dance a jig
 41. Say "hello" to a stranger
 42. Ask a friend for a hug
 43. Look up at the stars
 44. Practice breathing slowly
 45. Learn to whistle a tune
 46. Read a poem
 47. Listen to a symphony
 48. Watch a ballet
 49. Read a story curled up in bed
 50. Do a brand new thing
 51. Stop a bad habit
 52. Buy yourself a flower
 53. Take time to smell the flowers
 54. Find support from others
 55. Ask someone to be your "vent-partner"
 56. Do it today
 57. Work at being cheerful and optimistic>
 58. Put safety first
 59. Do everything in moderation
 60. Pay attention to your appearance
 61. Strive for Excellence NOT perfection
 62. Stretch your limits a little each day
 63. Look at a work of art
 64. Hum a jingle
 65. Maintain your weight
 66. Plant a tree
 67. Feed the birds
 68. Practice grace under pressure
 69. Stand up and stretch
 70. Always have a plan "B"
 71. Learn a new doodle
 72. Memorize a joke
 73. Be responsible for your feelings
 74. Learn to meet your own needs
 75. Become a better listener
 76. Know your limitations
and let others know them, too
 77. Tell someone to have a good day in pig Latin
 78. Throw a paper airplane
 79. Exercise every day
 80. Learn the words to a new song
 81. Get to work early
 82. Clean out one closet
 83. Play patty cake with a toddler
 84. Go on a picnic
 85. Take a different route to work
 86. Leave work early (with permission)
 87. Put air freshener in your car
 88. Watch a movie and eat popcorn
 89. Write a note to a far away friend
 90. Go to a ball game and scream
 91. Cook a meal and eat it by candlelight
 92. Recognize the importance of unconditional love
 93. Remember that stress is an attitude
 94. Keep a journal
 95. Practice a monster smile
 96. Remember you always have options
 97. Have a support network of people, places and
things
 98. Quit trying to fix other people
 99. Get enough sleep>
 100. Talk less and listen more
 101. Freely praise other people
- BONUS: Relax, take each day at a time...
you have the rest of your life to live!

Courtesy of the Tripler Regional Medical Center,
Honolulu, Hawaii

The Ten Commandments of Managing Stress

by Stacy Brice

*You are a child of the universe no less than the trees
and the stars; you have a right to be here.*

*And whether or not it is clear to you,
do not doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.*

— Max Ehrmann

Building or sustaining a small business can be wonderfully rewarding. At the same time, it is often quite stressful. Here are some ideas for dealing with the stresses so that you have more room for the fun!

Thou Shalt Manage Thyself

Most people talk about managing time in order to have more of what life has to offer, but it's only in managing ourselves that we really see a difference in our lives and are able to handle any stress life throws at us. Manage yourself and other things will fall into place.

Thou Shalt Control Thy Environment By Controlling Who And What Is Surrounding You

Life is like a teacup. There's only so much "stuff" that will fit into it. If you fill your cup with the wrong things and the wrong people, you won't have time for the right things and right people. The wrong things and people bring stress. The right people and things bring joy and contentment. Choose who and what gets your time and attention.

Thou Shalt Love Thyself

Acknowledge yourself for the good you do! Be gentle with yourself when things don't go as you might have wanted them

to. There are just some things that you can't control — no matter how much you want to. Love yourself for who you are right now — at this very moment.

Thou Shalt Reward Thyself

Leisure activities are otherwise known as recreational activities. When you do things that bring you joy, you are re-creating your spirit. Nurturing your spirit is a great way to help you reduce stress. Take time to do things that reward you, every day.

Thou Shalt Exercise Thy Body

Health and vitality depend on your body's ability to use oxygen and food effectively. One of the ways to help that happen is through exercise. Exercise also releases endorphins, which have been shown to improve one's mood, making it a great way to deal with stress! Move your body every day!

T

hou Shalt Relax Thyself

What do you do to really relax? Do you even take the time, or know how to? Meditation, listening to soothing music, spending time with friends and people you love, conscious breathing... these are all ways to really relax. If your mind is pulled to the things that stress you, you aren't really relaxed! Take time to be absolutely quiet every day.

Thou Shalt Rest Thyself

It's important to take breaks. Employers give you several during the day. Take them. If you work for yourself, it's critical to your success that you take time to rest — away from your office/desk — takes naps if you're feeling nappish! It's also important to get sufficient sleep. Most people need at least seven hours each night. Good sleep habits include having a set bed time and a set waking time. Did you know that if you don't get the amount of

sleep you need, you can be off (in your ability to think, respond and judge) by as much as 50% the next day? Following a pattern and establishing a rhythm for yourself and your body help you be more relaxed and less stressed during the day. Go to bed! Don't apologize for wanting to "turn in" early!

Thou Shalt be Aware of Thyself

Pay attention to your body. It gives you clues as to what it needs, and when something is wrong with it. Also, know what makes you feel great, and what makes you feel lousy. Being able to recognize them will help you make great decisions for yourself. Also, listen to your intuition. Your wise self never gives you the wrong answers. Your head, on the other hand, will almost always try to talk you out of it. Wake up and pay attention. You learn all sorts of things this way!

Thou Shalt Feed Thyself And Thou Shalt Not Poison Thy Body

Our minds have really been polluted with ideas of what a "healthy" diet looks like, and what "proper" nutrition is. Learn about what things like "low fat" prepared foods, sugar, fat, caffeine and tap water are really doing to your body. Improper nutrition causes stress in the body. It's not hard to get the right information and make great choices for yourself. Eat good stuff!! Your body will thank you!

Enjoy Thyself

We've all seen stories of people who are diagnosed with some horrible disease and given 6 months to live who have, in those last months, really developed a love of life — a desire to enjoy it all. Well, forget about the person with only 6 months.... what about you? You probably only have 80 or so years... shouldn't each moment of your life be utterly succulent too? There's only

so much time in this life. Every moment of it is precious. Make it all count. When you do, you'll find you have less stress, fewer physical problems, and that you're more productive. Look for the good/sweet/fun/joyous in every situation, even when life seems less than fair. You deserve the very best life has to offer, and life deserves the very best you have to give!

Stacy Brice is a nationally recognized expert on virtual work, virtual relationships and partnerships, community building, and work/life balance. Her work as pioneer of the Virtual Assistance profession, and the success of her own virtual university, Assist University, <http://www.assistu.com>, attest to her strength of conviction that people deserve to do work that lights them up inside, and that contributes to their having high quality lives.

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