

Finding Peace in the Grip of Stress

Life and relationships generate stress of various kinds. Why is it so difficult to manage stress? Once in the grip of stress how can we get out of it? What are the tools to manage stress so it does not hurt our lives and our relationships. What are God's guidelines to overcome stress? The workshop will focus on giving practical guidelines for managing stress and anxiety.

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I. What is stress:

Definition of stress: “the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change” (Hans Selye in 1936.)

Stress: is an energetic exchange – one that has the potential to lead to either growth or breakdown

- Eustress: caused by positive circumstances
- Distress: caused by negative circumstances

II. Why is it so difficult to manage stress? Perception and Control:

Research: the perception of an individual experiencing stress ultimately determines the response.

The sense of having little or no control is always distressful: that's what stress is all about.

a. Humanism as a stressor:

Control over having our needs met has become the basis of our value-system

Humanism:

Man is alone

- ➔ the focus is on the fulfillment on human needs and desires
- ➔ man is on a treadmill with an unreachable goal
- ➔ entire life is focused on the fulfillment of needs
- ➔ BUT how does he/she know what his/her real needs are?
- ➔ Who will define his/her needs?

Society – public opinion

The triumph of an idealized worldview:

- failure of the fulfillment of desires
- incomprehension
- disappointment in self/people/God
- rebellion
- disillusionment with self/people/God
- abandonment of God
- loss of identity

b. Cognitive Therapy: our anxiety is highly connected to the 3 MUSTs – the attitudes of control:

1. I must do well and win the approval of others or else I am no good.
2. Other people must do "the right thing" or else they are no good and deserve to be punished.
3. Life must be easy, without discomfort or inconvenience.

III. Stress management:

a. Respecting our bodies

- cardiovascular
- sleep
- healthy food
- *wandering*
- relationships
- creativity

b. Awareness of our stressing perceptions:

- What is motivating me? What fuels me? (my desires and wants)
- What am I hoping to gain from my *success*?
- What am I hoping to resolve in through my *success*?

c. What am I? vs. Who am I?

- healthy identity
- Beloved by God

IV. Biblical dimensions of stress management – Giving over the control:

1. Choice of self-discipline:

“You must be asking which door is the true one; not which pleases you best.”
C. S. Lewis

“Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.” Luke 13:24.

2. Knowing the sovereign God:

“I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying,
My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.” Isaiah 46:9–10

“Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.” Proverbs 19:21.

3. Confidence in God’s unfailing love:

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”
Deut.31:6.