

Stress — that merciless six-letter word in everyone's vocabulary, no doubt. Some experts think that chronic stress — emotional rather than physical — the type experienced day in, day out, can cause 50% of all disease, and that it contributes to the first and second leading causes of death: heart disease and cancer.

I have read that chronic stress can also be a factor in migraines, digestive problems, mental illness, chronic insomnia, fatigue, high blood pressure, asthma, allergies, ulcers, tooth decay, and the common cold. And experts say this constant stress can eventually end up harming our immune system, make us more prone to accidents, and simply bring on unhappiness, period. No wonder!!

The most common "stressors" to affect us emotionally, and in turn physically, are said to be major life changes, work, relationship difficulties, financial problems, illness, and family issues. I for one have experienced my share of these, and have certainly felt the effects of them; sometimes it's seemed, through every inch of my body and soul. I know most everyone deals with these stressors at one point or another, but that doesn't make it normal and they certainly don't need to make you or me sick.

Thing is, we can't completely eliminate stress from our lives, that would be an anomaly. Unless of course you happen to live in a water hut in Bora Bora. But we know, however, we can control how much it affects us. Especially the self-induced type we throw upon our shoulders purely under false pretenses, or…I don't know, self-pity? Ugh!

So experts say we should look at our stress levels and what is causing such, and do what we can to reduce its blows. Like for example, I'm sure you've heard that maintaining a regular routine consisting of proper diet, exercise, and adequate rest is essential in reducing and combating stress. Sure, okay, been there, done that, still stressed. The fact that I can't seem to make the time or have the will power to pull all that together stresses me even more. Personally, it's not until I alienate the cause, re-think my strategy, change my game plan, get drunk and smoke a joint…just kidding, just making sure you're paying attention…and do some "vent" writing that I begin to see some light and feel some relief. Dodging town for a bit of R&R also helps of course, but I can't always just pick up and go.

Which is why if I add something to that concoction above, stronger ingredients, if you will — unwavering faith, relentless prayer, and all the sense of humor I can muster — I definitely deal better. Turns out that in my one-on-ones with God there is no rhetoric, no pretense or pretext, no falsity, He already knows what's in my heart, what's troubling me; there is only honesty, and that in and of itself brings me peace. The sense of humor? Because God certainly seems to have one, so I must too.

My praying may not change the situations instantly, but it can my attitude in the face of the stress, and that does make a difference. Change I can count on. ;)

I hate stress! I love how God helps me deal with it. I hope He does you too.

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

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