

## Part II — Ridding Yourself of Stress

# WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH. . . BEING TOUGH ISN'T ALWAYS ENOUGH

*By Dr. Wayne Dyer*

Removing stress from your life will take practice. So make a regimen of anything you can that will help you to relax more in your life and send out the turmoil. Things such as relaxation, meditation, reading, music appreciation and the like. But always keep two things in mind: One, relaxation does not necessarily mean being inactive; two, if you are feeling anxious or stressful, it is residing in your very own body, and no place else. Consequently, YOU must take the responsibility for sending it away, and any activity which allows you to relax and do fun things for yourself will automatically encourage you to be less stressful. Remember, it is the way you think that creates stress, so you must begin to practice new and more relaxing thinking.

Remember, too, that worry will do nothing to improve the quality of your life. Practice "non-worry behavior" in five-minute intervals, since most stress is related to the presence of worried thoughts swirling around in your head. You can simply refuse to worry about something that is going to happen next week, until the very moment when the time arrives. Each time you are inclined to worry, remind yourself, "No amount of worry will change anything, so I am not going to worry at this moment." This kind of discipline will be easier if you are willing to practice. Remember the old slogan: "I'm an old man, and I've had many troubles, most of which HAVE NEVER HAPPENED."

### **Mind Control.**

Since stress comes from the way in which you think, and not from the situation or people involved in your stress, you can begin to practice mind control. When you find your mind occupied with a stress-producing thought, see if you can push it out for a sixty-second period of time. Simply refuse to think of the stress-producing thought for one full minute. This may sound simplistic, but it is the basis for ridding yourself of all self-defeating thoughts. The stress that you feel will soon disappear when you refuse to think stressfully for a full minute. Eventually, with practice, thinking non-stressfully will become habitual, just as stressful thinking has become a habit for you now.

### **Hurry Sickness**

Among the promises you make to yourself to reduce stress, you ought to vow to rid yourself of "hurry sickness." This means learning to slow down and stop expecting everyone in the world to be in a hurry. While driving, shopping, eating, expressing love, vacationing, or performing any activity, some people are always in a hurry. If you don't rid yourself of that continuous frenzy, you will be paying dearly in terms of inner upset, as well as in later damage to your body. Stay busy and involved, but don't have that constant rushed attitude that only intensifies

stress by adding unnecessary pressure to your life. Generally, if you slow yourself down inside, you not only reduce stress, but you also get the job done more efficiently and, ironically, more quickly as well.

If you feel the pressures of a lot of deadlines, whether self-imposed or not, and you are always feeling behind schedule, put a stop to this kind of lifestyle one day at a time. You needn't feel that life has to be completed on a schedule. Life is to be enjoyed rather than catalogued and organized perfectly. Leave your watch off for a day and just enjoy the day, just once. See if you don't feel better when you don't feel the pressure of a list, a time commitment, or some other standard. Deadline urgency is a critical component of those people who feel more stress in their lives, and you can be a person who puts many of those deadlines in the trash can where they belong.

### **Say No.**

If you are serving on too many committees, feel pressured by too many demands, have taken on too many responsibilities, then make a deliberate choice to restrict some of your activities. Say NO, firmly and finally, when you are asked to do things that bring too much additional pressure into your life. Save some time for being with your loved ones, rather than filling up every moment with stressful thinking as a result of being over-committed. Saying NO and meaning it is an effective stress-reducer in your life.

### **Enjoy The Moment.**

Life itself has an "unfinished" quality. You will never complete everything that has to be done. When you really understand this, you will see that you can never get everything done. Do the things you chose to do because you value them as important, and then let the rest of them go in favor of enjoying your life. Take the pressure off of yourself to be perfect, and instead put the focus on being able to be fully involved in the present moment. Find excitement in each of your moments. Enjoy whatever it is that you are doing in the moment with a new and wonderful attitude about it. Don't demand perfection from yourself; insist, instead, on finding fulfillment in every single moment of your life. The key to accepting the unfinished aspect of your life is all in your attitude toward what you do, and in removing the pressure from yourself to get everything done, perfectly and immediately.

An atmosphere of peace is crucial. Work one day at a time to bring it to your family and home. Anything that you are doing which brings about upset and strife, either in yourself or in other family members ought to be examined and then eliminated. If you are picky, fastidious, pushy, arrogant, or have any personality trait which is unpleasant to others, then go to work at changing it. Practice biting your tongue and postponing an outburst for a few minutes. If you eliminate one horrible scene at home or on the job through this technique, you will have sent some stress out of your life, as well as the lives of others. Do what you can to make your home a fun, pleasant, non-hostile place. This kind of effort on your part will not only rub off on other family members, but it will make your time on the job more pleasant and stress-free as well.

### Time Alone.

And what should you do with your time? It's important to take one hour each day just for you. Take a walk, or read a book on your lunch hour. Even if you feel guilty at first, simply remind yourself that you are worth it, and that you are going to do it regardless of how much prior conditioning you've had to be always busy and productive. It doesn't matter what you do during your lunch hour, but give yourself this time period one hour a day for one week, and see if you don't begin to really look forward to that time. Any person who doesn't know how to get away from the desk, doesn't belong behind it in the first place.

You need a similar kind of time alone at home. It's called privacy. Seek it out. Insist upon having a time and a place in your home in which you can be alone. You are not only entitled to your privacy, you need it in order to survive as a healthy stress-free person. When you are constantly feeling as though your space is being invaded, you are under stress. The way to send that stress away is to be assertive about demanding privacy from every member of your family. It is also important to permit others to have privacy. Don't make regular inspections or enter spaces without knocking or seeking permission.

You also will find that happiness, just like misery, is infectious. Try smiling deliberately and saying hello in a friendly manner to five strangers today. Doing something nice is one of the greatest stress relievers in the world. If you feel good about yourself, you won't feel stress, and nothing feels better than knowing you have done something to relieve another person's burden, even if it is only with a smile. A smile is a good way to break up the "serious scenery" of everyday life.

### Vary Your Life.

Speaking of scenery, that's something you should change a lot in your life. Boredom breeds stress, and you can eradicate boredom by being flexible and changing your surroundings regularly. Don't do things the same way all the time; hire someone to come in and do some of the chores that you find tiresome, or get a neighborhood youngster to take on some tasks for a financial payment. Get away on weekends, even if it is just to the next town. The message is: If you vary your "menu," life will be exciting; if you keep it the same you will feel bored, and eventually you will feel the ravages of stress in one form or another.

### Be In Charge Of Your Life.

A particularly important cause of stress might be the way you treat yourself. Remember that chemicals do not solve problems, nor does alcohol. It is imperative that you visit a doctor who is interested in helping you to reduce any chemical dependencies, rather than one who encourages you to gulp anti-depressants and tranquilizers as an antidote for your stress. If your physician doesn't cooperate with you in your efforts to be less chemically dependent, then seek out another professional who can be of help to you in reaching this goal. Stay off the "anxiety pills," and be in charge of your life, rather than being numbed by consciousness-altering drugs to the point of not being able to han-

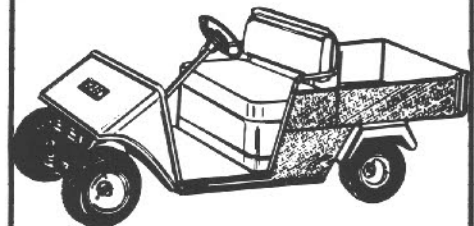
dle normal life problems without their aid.

A flabby lifestyle will also affect your stress level. Too much sitting and not enough action lead to stress, overweight, and boredom. Get up and jog, swim, walk, play games, toss a frisbee, or anything that will keep you from too much sitting around and fretting away the hours of your life.

### You Control Stress.

Most importantly, love and respect yourself at all times. Like all self-defeating conditions, stress is something that you can do to yourself. If you love yourself, then you do not want to do damage to yourself, since you never want to hurt something that you love. Stress is actually a severe form of self-rejection. It's an indication that the person who is in possession of the stress lacks inner peace and, therefore, is taking a step in the direction of self-destruction by thinking and behaving in stressful ways. Make no mistake about it, stress is really a killer. The results of the damages of stress are too widespread and common to catalog neatly, but every professional in the health and helping professions sees the results of too much stress every day, whether it be in a hospital, a mental health clinic, or in simply observing how people behave publicly in stressful ways. You don't have to be a victim of stress, if you will take the corrective steps toward eliminating it. The choice to be without tension, stress or anxiety for the rest of your life can be made immediately. Meanwhile, the world will continue to go on just as it always has, regardless of your opinion about it. You see, the world is a stress-free place. Only you can **think** stressfully. Only you can create your stress. As a result, only you can get rid of it.

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