

Overcoming Stress and Depression: How I Got There (Part 2)

Other Ways to Beat Stress

Aside from diet and exercise, there are other ways to overcome stress and depression... that is, **BEAT STRESS!**

B is for being realistic. This involves a reality check. Ask yourself: is this something I can change? If not, we must move on with the deck that has been dealt, and the right attitude is everything. Our mood follows our thoughts, and if we embrace disappointments as opportunities, we shift our focus and head off stress.



E is for examining your emotions and thoughts. We stress out because of fear of the unknown. Examine your thoughts. When we realize that we are only human and that only God can control the future, when we choose to place the burden on the Burden Carrier, we can then walk in confidence and have His peace.

A is for air. Deep breathing is an excellent way to diffuse stress. Taking in fresh air oxygenates the entire body and mind. Many of us by habit are shallow breathers, especially when under stress. Deep breathing exercises cause relaxation of the mind, lower the blood pressure, cause release of endorphins, bring focus to the mind, and rid the body of toxins. Ten full, deep inspirations of pure fresh air act as a tonic to soothe the nerves.



T is time for thanksgiving. Taking time out to reflect and be thankful for the positive aspects of life has a positive effect on the body. Just like negative thoughts draw negative stress hormones, positive thoughts cause the release of positive hormones, and these chemicals bring healing to the mind. Cultivating a spirit of gratitude takes the sting out of stress.

S is for sleep. Did you know 40% of Americans get less than seven hours of sleep per night? Our sleep deprivation is taking a toll, and it's one of the major reasons we cave in when under stress. Inadequate sleep increases cortisol levels, increases inflammation, suppresses the immune system, and causes a host of other problems. Mental focus, mood, memory, and problem-solving abilities are enhanced with a good night's sleep. To sleep well, check your concerns at the door and let tomorrow take care of itself. Avoid stimulants, such as tea, caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol. Make sure your room is completely dark and watch no TV before going to bed.



T is for trust. The definition of trust is to have confidence in and reliance on someone. A trusting relationship with God frees the mind from burdens, doubt, and fears.

R is for rest. Today we are living in an ever-increasing world of technology where iPods, laptops, instant text messaging, cell phones, Facebook, and Twitter rule the day. These devices are useful, but if used in excess, they become stressors. Taking time out for rest and relaxation from digital juggling and from other regular activities gives the brain the needed time to reboot and replenish its reserves. There are many ways to relax: a massage, a hot bath, a stroll in the park, essential oils, a walk on the beach, gardening, or relaxing music. Find what works for you.



E is for encourage. The Bible tells us that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Encouraging others is a form of giving, and when unselfishly done we are in essence helping ourselves. Studies show that a spirit of giving decreases stress levels, releases endorphins, and boosts the immune system. Encouraging others will be an encouragement to you.

S is for sunshine. Sunshine has a direct impact upon the mood and sleep-wake cycle. We all have undoubtedly noticed that with a few days of cloudy skies, our mood tends to go south. Low serotonin levels are the culprit. Serotonin regulates mood, and sunshine is needed to boost serotonin production. For a better mood and a great night's sleep, you'll need your daily dose of sunshine.



S is for social relationships. It is not good for man – or woman – to be alone. We were created to be social beings. People with healthy social relationships have fewer symptoms of stress, are less likely to become ill, and if they do, they tend to have quicker recoveries. With today's technology we are becoming increasingly isolated. The human touch – as in hearing a voice, seeing a smile, enjoying a laugh – has therapeutic effects for mind and body. It's time to reach out, reconnect, talk face to face, and build those social networks.



--excerpt taken from *Mind-Body-God Connection, How I Found Healing, A New Way Of Looking At Disease* by Darlene D. Hall, RN. Xulon Press, 2010.