



Slowing down, prioritizing can help manage stress level

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In such a busy culture, how do we manage the stress of it all? You may even ask yourself at times "Can this lead to a mental breakdown?"

The American Psychological Association's 2007 article "Stress in America" reports that nearly one third of people in America are experiencing high levels of stress. One out of five people reported that they experience high levels of stress 15 or more days a month.

A number of things can contribute to someone's stress level: the ability to cope with change, history of trauma, the intensity and the duration. When we have extreme levels of stress they can affect us both mentally and physically.

Following are some tips for managing stress:

- **Be mindful:** Often times we are meeting ourselves coming and going, but never really stop and pay attention to everything as it is happening. How many times have you been driving and, once you arrive, aren't even sure how you got there? We need to be aware of what is going on around us because we are missing out. Our lives are happening and we aren't in them. The next time you are spending time with the kids, hanging out with your family or on a vacation, be in that moment only. Don't think about what needs to be done or what you should be doing; just enjoy yourself at that time.
- **Prioritize, prioritize and prioritize:** How many times have you heard this before? But do we really? Maybe the fact is, we do, but we don't have things in the

right order. Make a values list of what is most important in your life. Then organize your day by what has to be done, should be done and what you would like to do according to your list.

- **Self care:** So, are you thinking about your list? Did you take time for yourself? We have to stop making excuses. We need to be near the top of that list. Selfish? No. How are we able to take care of anyone else if we are not taking care of ourselves? Ask yourself: Is there something I used to enjoy that I have given up? Are there things I need to do for myself that I have been putting off? Am I being a good role model to those around me? Truth is, if you are neglecting yourself, you're exhausting yourself.
- **Limits:** We cannot be all for everyone. We need to set boundaries for ourselves and for others. There is a limit to what can be done by one person, and if we spend our time trying to do it all we aren't helping those around us. This is especially true for those with children. But knowing that we are giving them a chance to learn responsibility and by keeping to boundaries we set, we can help them follow through.

Stress can become too much. We can get to a point where it is interfering with our ability to function for long periods of time.

Please seek out professional help if you feel as if you cannot work through issues or cannot cope with situations.

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