

# De-stress to avoid distress

*Good self-care provides a way through life's stressful moments*

*Charles and Charlene Van den Akker*

Are you stressed? Stress is defined as “a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances.”

For most people, the honest answer to the question is a resounding “yes!” Because at almost any moment in life there is usually some adverse or demanding circumstance.

For a baby, the physical absence of a mother can be traumatic; but as a baby grows into a toddler, he

learns mommy usually isn't that far away.

For a young child, misplacing a teddy bear or favourite toy could be horrifying; but as a child grows into a teen she learns that things—although important—can be replaced.

A teen might struggle with relationships and identity: he depends on others to define who he is even if it doesn't feel right; but as he grows into an adult he learns (hopefully!) that he is who he decides to be under the umbrella of God's adoptive grace.

As an adult, you may struggle with your job, a growing or maturing family, maintaining a home, planning for retirement, the onset of old age, and more. Sometimes you may witness the suffering and loss of loved ones. Maybe you suffer a “thorn in your flesh” as Paul did—mentally, emotionally, or physically.

So how do you “de-stress” your life?

Some stressors you can control: if you don't like your job, you have the option to search for a new one; keep in mind that the search and change can create new stress for a time, yet the end result can be worthwhile.

Some sources of stress are limited, but can be managed. If you don't get along with your family, you can't get a new one, but you can keep them at a distance to maintain your love and respect.

But there are some stressors that are simply out of your control, such as a chronic disease or disability, or having loved ones move away or pass on.

## What then?

First, change what you can. Maybe you're stalling on the change, or you need some advice from wise friends. The longer you wait, the greater the toll on you.

Second, create flexibility for yourself. Make sure that your mental, emotional, physical and spiritual needs are being met in other areas of your life or add in new opportunities to do so: take a class or workshop, join a support group or Bible study, or begin a group of your own. A lot of stress can be conquered by learning new things about life.

Finally—and most importantly—have some fun! Do some things just because you want to, not because you have to. Take a walk, read a book, enjoy a bath, play a game. It isn't selfish, it's self-care and self-care is the balance to stress.

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