



WHY ARE WE SO STRESSED?!

Philippians 4:7: (NASB) *And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*



Stress is all around us and unfortunately, within us. We know stress is not good for us. Physically, it wreaks havoc with our bodies. Mentally, it causes us to make poor, rash decisions and not work up to our full capacity. It causes us to lash out at those around us and causes damage to relationships we once cherished. Having the peace of God does not mean all is quiet in our lives. It means that even though everything is falling down around us, we are still able to hold onto our anchor in the storm and remain balanced and content. Easier said than done! What are some practical ways we can accomplish this so we can have a strong, steady walk with the Lord instead of being

distracted and always giving our second best? Stay with us as we explore true peace to combat all of the anxiety this world has to offer.

We have asked one of our CQ volunteers, Julie, to join us on this episode, as she suggested this topic would be important.

Julie: This topic is important because it literally affects every human in every culture across every time period. We all are prone to stress. Here in the United States we are in a unique time - looking to our immediate past we just finished a very stressful presidential election. Looking to our immediate future, we have the holidays coming up, which traditionally are the most stressful time for people. If we are stressed, we likely are not giving our best to the Lord, so now is a really good time to lay out scriptural principles that can help us keep it all together!

Just because we are in Christ does not mean that everything is always well. On the contrary, being in Christ PROMISES we will be under trial, stress and hurt - and not just from sources that are outside of the true church but also our stress and difficulty can come from wonderful and well-meaning sources within.

There was stress in the early church:

Acts 15:1-5: (NASB) *'Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.*

Some Christians announced that all new converts would need to be circumcised. This was a wrong conclusion, but there was legitimacy to this argument. Although after the death of Jesus they would not be subject to the rituals of the Law, the argument was that circumcision was started with Abraham, long before the Law was given. This was used as a symbol of being separated from the world.



AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE INFORMATION

- Affects about **50 million** Americans
- Develops when your immune system, which defends your body against disease, decides your healthy cells are foreign and your **immune system attacks healthy cells**. Your immune system can't decide what it considers "self" and what is **NOT** "self." The type of body tissue it attacks depends on the disease.
- There are as many as **80 types** of autoimmune diseases and it is possible to have more than one at the same time.
- Generally there are **no cures**, only treatment focusing on relieving symptoms.
- We know these as names like: **Lupus, chronic fatigue, Crohn's disease, juvenile diabetes, Lyme disease, multiple sclerosis, psoriasis and rheumatoid arthritis.**
- A lot of factors are thought to cause autoimmune diseases: genetic, environmental, hormonal, and immunological factors, but the onset of at least **50%** of autoimmune disorders have been attributed to "unknown trigger factors." **Physical and psychological stress** has been implicated in the development of autoimmune disease, as shown by numerous animal and human studies.
- Up to **80%** of patients reported **uncommon emotional stress** before disease onset. **Unfortunately, not only does stress cause disease, but the disease itself also causes significant stress in the patients, creating a vicious cycle.**

Though it is difficult to share our personal struggles, the best way to understand and conquer stress might be to see it through Scripture and watch how it unfolds in others and how they work through it.



To find stress management answers we will look into another stressful early church situation:

Philippians 4:1-2: (NASB) *¹Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. ²I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.*

These were two women in the church at Philippi who could not come to an agreement. We do not know the subject, but it was important enough for the Apostle Paul to call them out by name in a letter to the entire church. He urged them to come to a point of being able to agree. The Apostle Paul dealt with a difficult situation that obviously was moving the church away from a pattern of growth and development. The Apostle was aware of the situation and wanted those in Philippi to look it in the eye and acknowledge there was an issue.

Being aware of stress is the first major step in trying to conquer it.



Now that we are staring at the pain of our stress, what do we do next?

When we long for life without difficulties, remind us that oaks grow strong in contrary winds and diamonds are made under pressure. - Peter Marshall

Julie: Stress is cumulative. In the Bonus Material you will find a list of common warning signs and symptoms of chronic stress. The more of these you notice in yourself, the closer you may be to stress overload.

To quote an article I read recently about emotional awareness: “Many of us are so used to being overloaded with stress that we don't even notice it anymore. Feeling stressed feels *normal*. But awareness of what you're feeling, physically and emotionally, can have a profound effect on both your stress tolerance and how you go about reducing stress. Having the emotional awareness to recognize when you're stressed and then being able to calm and soothe yourself can increase your tolerance to stress and help you bounce back from adversity.”

Stress-triggered hormones lead to a disruption in the immune system. My autoimmune issue is called Alopecia Areata, which is hair loss generally characterized by round bald patches on the scalp, or can involve facial hair or all body hair. My body does not recognize my hair as being my own, so it seeks to destroy it, similar to how someone with a kidney transplant must continually be on anti-rejection medication or else the immune system will recognize it as foreign and will kill it. Just with any autoimmune disease, it is not contagious but is psychologically difficult. Six million people in the United States are struggling with this disease.



Continuing:

Philippians 4:3: (NASB) *Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

Notice how the stressful situation is not overwhelming the Apostle's viewpoint of those involved. He confirms that they are all named in the book of life, even in the midst of the dissension. This gives us a deep lesson in fellowship, in being able to approach the issue and still see the people at odds in the most positive way possible. Let the love of Christ overwhelm and overcome this problem.

Who shared my struggle - Paul enters in with them to help them get over the issue.

Jesus is our primary source of comfort:

Matthew 11:28-30: (NASB) ²⁸*Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.* ²⁹*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* ³⁰*For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*



LOOK UP to Jesus, REACH UP and hand over your burden as you 'FESS UP about your brokenness



Here is how the Apostle Paul handled the stress of life:

2 Corinthians 1:2-7: (NASB) ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. ⁶But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; ⁷and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.

Whether the Apostle received affliction or comfort, it was ALWAYS used for the benefit of others. What a way to deal with stress!

Realize that others' experiences can be golden teaching tools for you in your stress. Even if the details are different, the core lessons are the same. SHARE your sufferings!



This is one of the reasons Julie was willing to share her own difficulty in dealing with stress.

Julie: It is important to remember that we all have different stress tolerances and these might change throughout our lives. While you may be really good at multi-tasking at this point with these particular stressors, things can change and suddenly your body can no longer handle it.

Although I first developed symptoms of Alopecia Areata as a child, they came back unexpectedly around the age of 40. They were easily managed as quarter-sized spots and the treatment was cortisone shots directly into the scalp every six weeks until the spots grew back. Yes, it is as uncomfortable as that sounds. So, we play chase the spots. You do it in three spots and the hair grows back and you are doing just fine, but five more bald spots appear. You shoot those spots and six more grow in. It is kind of like playing the game Whack-a-Mole. For years it did not really affect my life because it was easy for me to hide the problem with hairspray or a ponytail.

But then about four years ago, a variety of stressors converged that individually I think I could have handled but collectively seemed to cause my immune system to go completely out of whack. My hair fell out in chunks and soon the hair on my entire right side all fell out with no way to hide it.



Especially as a woman, this was devastating because hair is extremely important for self-esteem. From a business perspective, it was now impossible for me to meet with clients in that condition. I was mortified people would notice.

My stress level was at an all time high at this point. I was working way too many hours with extremely difficult clients to the point that any time the phone rang or an email came in, I would feel physically ill. My husband's parents were both sick with terminal diseases including a long bout with Alzheimer's, so we had that plus a lot of family dynamics to deal with. I was the power of attorney for my husband's aunt with dementia and was responsible for all aspects of her life. My beloved cat was dying and had to be put to sleep, and one of my closest friends moved out of state. I felt like I needed 30 hours a day to even stay afloat and was shortchanged by only being given 24 hour days.

I think stress played a role in my immune system going haywire, but then I became stressed because of the effects of the disease. It is a vicious cycle.

It is difficult because if you have to have a disease and were allowed to pick one, you likely would chose one that causes no physical pain, which is what I have. But that does not mean it isn't painful in other ways. Part of the stress is the guilt that although devastating, it is not as bad as what someone else is going through.

“Well, at least you don't have cancer,” creates guilt, which creates more stress.

This fits so well:

John 16:27: (NASB) *For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.*

It is said that taking a hot bath can be relaxing. Bathe in the knowledge that **God Himself - the Father and Creator of all - loves you and therefore will help you to be an OVERCOMER!**



What is your response to this?

Julie: You have to keep coming back to this as your core, as your balance. You have to believe that God exists. You have to believe He cares for you, loves you and knows what you are going through, and there is a reason why you are going through it.

I think of the Apostle Paul with all his afflictions. He asked for them to be removed. They were not - and then he was at peace because he knew God loved Him and had a purpose, so he was just going to move on and do other things.



There is a high level of acceptance that the Father Himself loves you. It is still a hard thing to put this into practice and make stress go away.

**Now we know we do not have to be alone in our stress.
So how do we begin the healing process?**

It's not the load that breaks you down, it's the way you carry it. - Lou Holtz

Julie, you were overloaded and literally losing your hair through this autoimmune disorder. How do you cope?

Julie: It is not easy. Certain days are harder than others. I'm at the point now where I have lost my hair, eyebrows and eyelashes. So, I look very different from how I used to look. I have great empathy for burn victims where you look in the mirror and you don't look like yourself. I don't think the brain likes that because it is very jarring and demoralizing.

I also have great empathy with my friends who have multiple sclerosis, where you can instantly tell something is not right with the way they walk or move. It can be mortifying the way people look at you.

It is difficult to leave the house because a lot of preparation has to be made. The CQ program from July 28, 2013 called, "What Are You Worried About?" helped me. This provided scriptural remedies for worry and anxiety. When I am having a bad day or a pity party, I will go back and listen to that.

When I was going through a difficult adjustment period and had no way to cope with what was happening, I confided in a close friend who wrote me a letter as if it were a letter from God beginning with, "To my dear daughter."

It is about a specific prophecy in Isaiah:

Isaiah 61:1-3: (KJV) ¹The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; ²To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; ³To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

The letter said "...I give you beauty for ashes. I say to you, do not cover your head in ashes any longer! I say to you, do not worry about what will cover your head any longer! I say to you, do not walk in despair, sorrow or grief - rather, rise up and receive my gift to overcomers! I give you beauty for ashes. Properly understood, beauty actually means a headdress or turban, a beautiful garland to cover your head. It is a garland of joy, a garland of peace, a garland of victory. My child, I give you this beautiful garland, this crown, this covering to say to you - I love you - and because you follow My son, your head is now covered with the beauty of righteousness - his righteousness! My child, when I look down upon you I see you through his righteousness and all of your trials, pain, suffering and uncertainty, they are now covered in beauty! His beauty, his victory, his love!"



This gives a change in perspective that it does not matter in the long run as long as I am covered through Jesus and the Lord loves me. This demonstrates how there is a lot we can do for others. This letter came at a great time and meant a lot to me. We can write a note of encouragement, we can volunteer to pick up someone’s kids or do their grocery shopping. We can give a caregiver a few hours to get a massage and take a walk alone. Sometimes the smallest acts of kindness make the biggest difference. At the Schindler holocaust museum in Poland, there is a sign that says, “A small gesture can yield irreversible consequences. It can either save a life or ruin it.”

The outcome of all of this is I made some drastic changes in my life. I let work know that I was taking an unpaid leave of absence and ended up taking over four months off. I had to stop, reset and refocus.

We sense the pain but also the reaching for the relief and learning how to put the relief in place.



A CQ App user from Illinois says: I know Julie...she is one of the most beautiful women I know!

Part of being a Christian is seeing the beauty of Christ within those with whom we walk.

The Apostle has confronted the issue (#1: Aware). He has looked for help in addressing it (#2: Assistance), and now he tells us how to cope:

Philippians 4:4-6: (NASB) *⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

This can seem silly and even trite. How am I supposed to rejoice, be without anxiety and be thankful when my whole life is collapsing around me?

Julie: Everything has to be put in perspective. Things here are temporary and my goal is something higher.



Think higher, act higher. See from a higher place. Circumstances can and often do easily dictate our state of mind. Our state of mind is an absolute choice and does NOT have to be captive to what is happening around or to you. The Apostle Paul is telling us to choose our thoughts!





The struggle is with the state of mind, making the choice not to be captive to the circumstances; to be free to choose a higher way.

Julie: The trick is to not have these stresses consume you, because they can. This problem shows up in my dreams and affects so much of my life, but you have to push those out and put other things in your life that are bigger than “it.”

This choice of higher thoughts reaps a powerful harvest.

This brings us to our theme Scripture:

Philippians 4:7: (NASB) *And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Pursue the peace of God, for it will not arbitrarily grace you with its presence. God's peace can only come to us when we make room for it, when we evict our own will and our own way in favor of His higher plan - whatever that plan may be!



The peace of God does not just come sauntering into your life; you have to pursue it, Julie. “Whatever that plan may be” was written with your experience in mind. Although you have made a lot of adjustments, the issue is still there. What has to change? Sometimes the circumstances do not change, but the peace of God in our hearts can grow and take over, and learn to evict the stressors in our lives and take root. Both cannot live in our hearts.

Much has been written on the “power of attraction;” these are the places where it really does work:

Philippians 4:8-9: (NASB) *⁸Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. ⁹The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

Think on things that are in this list. That is the power of attraction. When we dwell on the stress in our lives, the stress gets bigger and overwhelming. If we dwell on things worthy of praise, they can also overwhelm us in a good way.

Commit to higher ways (even if you continually fail at them), for the power of choosing our thoughts to be godly takes time to learn. Find examples of those who inspire you and follow them as they follow Christ.



Because he interna

Philippians 4:12: (NASB) *I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.*

Julie: The Apostle Paul’s external circumstances were irrelevant because he was internally so attuned to God that he was in balance. I have a mental



image of a gyroscope, which if you have ever seen or used a Segway, that is what keeps it constantly self-leveling. A gyroscope maintains orientation for a Segway and other instruments.



That is the image that comes to me - no matter what happens externally or even right at the top of my head, our job is to give God our focused best. We cannot be giving Him glory if we let chronic stress build up that keeps us off balance and so busy with worries and cares.

The power to cope with stress ultimately comes from our ability to let go of what we cannot control, to be alert to our old habits and thinking and to be prepared to always resist Satan:

1 Peter 5:6-10: (NASB) ⁶Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. ⁸Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. ¹⁰After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

Humility, follow-through and preparedness are all elements of the power to cope.

In terms of dealing with your personal experience and the things you have learned, as someone going through stress, what do you say to others to encourage them to find their center?

Julie: In the next hour we will go over different practical techniques of stress relief and most of it comes down to redeeming the time (**Ephesians 5:16**). Are you going to spend your time crying about it and being upset about it? (The honest answer is, “Yes, sometimes.”) Seek people who are a good support system for you, and people who can help you. More importantly, seek people YOU can help. It is not all about us. If we can find a way to help someone else, it takes you outside of your own self.

The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.
- William James





There are many places, circumstances and experiences that deliver stress to our lives. Now we will touch on some of the more obvious stressors and see if we can find practical solutions.

Rick's "Epic Fail" story: In the 1980's, Jonathan and I worked at a cabinet shop together. I was the general manager. Trish and I had two kids and pregnant with our third. I was on salary, which was cool because I got a big raise and was expected to work maybe 45 hours a week. I was gullible and believed this. Months went by and 45 turned into 50, which turned into 60+, working days, nights and weekends and taking work home. I was never able to get away from it. We had just bought a house that needed a lot of work. I am motivated and want to do well, so I worked hard at this demanding job. I was to raise children and rebuild a house. What should have taken six months took me two years because I would start a project and it was worse than I anticipated.

At that point, I began to get overwhelmed. Many times you do not see what is happening in your life and I did not look up; I just kept plowing through and attacking and it kept draining more and more of my reserves. I was only 28 years old at the time and when you are young, you have energy. I was relying on those reserves but not able to replace them because the pace never stopped. The stress started to grow and I began to realize I was in trouble. This was one of the epic failures of my life. To be continued...



Sometimes stress involves family dynamics and part of the challenge is to "stay above the fray." Jesus set a sound principle in place for this:

Luke 12:13-15: (NASB) ¹³Someone in the crowd said to him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me. ¹⁴But he said to him, Man, who appointed me a judge or arbitrator over you? ¹⁵Then he said to them, Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.

Be on guard against all forms of greed. Greed creates stress because it is insatiable. "Things" make us stressed, and often family squabbles are over material possessions.

Our personal "greed and need factor" inherently creates stress. To continually moderate this desire is to keep its stress from even approaching our lives.



Matthew 5:7-9: (NASB) ⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. ⁸Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Merciful, pure in heart, peacemaker. These are ways of being, not things, and these can help keep stress at bay.



What does being a peacemaker mean?

Julie: Being a peacemaker does not always mean being the go-between counselor and it does not mean to gossip with one side or the other, taking sides. I think sometimes it means staying out of it entirely and being a good example where possible, quietly doing the tasks others are arguing about.

Decades from now we probably won't even remember what we were so stressed about, but it is possible your body will still be suffering physical effects from it.

Stay out of it and move on. Families hold grudges! Get rid of the grudge.

If we daily build mercy, a clean heart and peacemaking as a foundation of life, we can head stress off before it even arrives.



What is a practical way to reduce stress?

Julie: What many experts say is the most important thing... BREATHE! Deep, conscious breathing. In (count to 10) out (count to 10).



This always makes me think of Jonathan because one of his favorite words is *selah* as used in the Psalms, meaning “pause and consider.” Use the space between your breaths to calm down. This is easy because it is free, you can do it anywhere and in front of anyone! Breathe. Selah. Pause and consider.

The experts today tell us this is what we should do, and here David wrote the Psalms thousands of years ago and gave us the same advice.

Sometimes we are overrun by stress when we are not confident in our ability to do a task, or take a stand or fulfill a responsibility:



Hebrews 10:32-36: (NASB) ³²But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, ³³partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. ³⁴For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. ³⁵Therefore, **do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.** ³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

The Apostle is asking us to remember when we were in dire straits and stood up under it and met the challenge. *Do not throw away your confidence* - look back and see what you were able to accomplish. Do not get tired now. We can find strength and inspiration in our prior victories as well as those of others.



We all have past experiences we can look back on and see how God's hand guided us. Relive that victory in Christ and look for God's leading in this new experience.



We fall down but God is always our enduring strength.

Psalm 73:26: (NASB) *My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

Julie: During periods when you do not have confidence in yourself is when you have to lean on the Lord more.

If you are not in crisis mode right now, learning your Scriptures and meditating on motivational stories will help stabilize you during the next big storm that will probably come.



Scripture memorization and instant prayers throughout the day take up no time at all but help us rebalance.

Perhaps we unplug from social media and the news and refocus on who we really want to be. Redeem the time.

I have a friend who is a CQ volunteer who walks every day and walks with her CQ App to hear archived programs or listens to sermons or other uplifting programs.

In times when we are not confident, it is a good time to build up our spiritual muscles. I just heard a sermon recently about Sampson grinding corn day after day as a slave. It gave him the eventual strength to bring down the columns. What we are going through is strengthening us.

It becomes a matter of our mental perspective and seeing there is strength available if we avail ourselves and use it.

**Okay, so I can cause myself stress,
but what about the stress from without that arrives gift-wrapped?**

The components of anxiety, stress, fear, and anger do not exist independently of you in the world. They simply do not exist in the physical world, even though we talk about them as if they do.
- Wayne Dyer

We need to rise above stress by processing it differently in our minds.

Rick's "Epic Fail" story (continued): I knew I was in trouble and overstressed. I knew I could not cope and looked for solutions. I bought and read books on stress management and it did absolutely no good. I prayed and prayed and prayed about it and could not get out of it. I felt myself sinking in my own life and will never forget that sense of despair. I even started to turn down Christian privileges at church. I actually started to give up. I was completely



lost. I got to a point where instead of asking the Lord to help me manage it, I started praying, "Lord, I will do anything." I could not even give my little children the attention they deserved because I could not mentally be present. I could not give my wife the attention she deserved. I was on autopilot at work. Nothing was good from within me. Everything that came from me was mechanical and fake. "Lord, I will do anything." I was set up to crash and burn. To be continued...

Matthew 5:11-12: (NASB) *11Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

We are blessed, but we still may feel stressed!

What should we hold on to?

Romans 8:31,35: (NASB) *31What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 35Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

Scriptures like this have to be more than our intellectual understanding.



We can once again return to the inward workings of our own minds. We can choose to **REJECT** the nastiness of our environment from invading our mind's sacred space, which is solely reserved for godly worship, praise and thought - that's what Jesus did!



There is a sense of sacredness in the mind of a Christian. There is supposed to be a place where God's Spirit dwells within us. When we allow stress in, we have to push something else out.

Julie: I like to bake a pan of brownies and then eat the whole thing. I am kidding! Okay, no I am not. I have done it and felt much better and then felt much worse. But there is something to this - research has shown chewing helps to reduce the level of stress hormone called cortisol. And celery has a calming cancer-fighting element called apigenin that has traditionally been used to reduce anxiety and insomnia. Not as fun as brownies, but much better for you in the long run. This is also found in parsley, artichokes and chamomile tea.



Sometimes it is helpful to have a little tea and a little quiet to help rebalance. *If God is for us, who can be against us?* Selah! Pause and consider!





It is important to realize that sometimes the things that do not seem so exciting is the pathway to managing trials and tribulations and the tsunami of experiences surrounding you.



Stress becomes ever more tenacious when we become just too tired to fight:

Isaiah 40:28-31: (NASB) ²⁸Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. ²⁹He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. ³⁰Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, ³¹yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.

We may stumble and fall, but our God IS eternal energy, direction and purpose! He does not get tired. We can *mount up with wings like eagles* because of His strength if we have the faith, trust and humility

to allow His strength to respond through us.

Philippians 4:13: (KJV) *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

2 Corinthians 12:9-10: (NASB) ⁹And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.



Understand that our strength and courage are most likely going to wane. If we are rightly exercised when they do, we will be opened up to new strength and courage from on high. Therefore, our weakness is the perfect opportunity for God's peace to reign over our feeble hearts and minds!



We are going to fall apart and that is okay. This is a great stress relief! We just need to get up again.

Julie: *Being content with weakness* with me personally, part of my goal is to not let Satan win. When you have medical issues or whatever the stress, you can easily become bitter, angry and mad at God and "why me?" and Satan wins, and then there is no glory to it. I am trying to very consciously be able to give glory to God regardless of the weakness.

There is an end result to every battle. If we have God's glory in our minds and hearts, it changes the way we fight. Have the motivation to crush the adversary - not because you are so strong (because you are not), but God's grace and strength can lift us beyond the stress.



We need an anchor for our soul whose weight holds us steady and stable through the storms of life:

2 Corinthians 4:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. (This is stress relief!)

Our *outer man* might not be doing so well, but our *inner man* is being renewed day by day. Even if our outer circumstances cannot change, our inner circumstances are supposed to grow and develop.

Julie: We do not have control over a lot of stressors. We lose our job. We get sick, the kids are driving us crazy or my college classes all have a test at the same time. Sometimes we can de-stress by taking control over something - even if it is as instantly rewarding as organizing our sock drawer and throwing out the ones with holes in them, or cleaning out the garage or whatever it is that has always given you some small anxiety. Start giving away or throwing away what you do not need. Clutter is proven to raise your pulse, blood pressure and stress hormones. Get rid of it!



Clutter contributes to weariness, and everyone becomes weary. We have to lean on something more powerful than ourselves - God's wisdom, power, love and grace.

So stress IS controllable! Good news, but what about my belly fat?



A CQ App user from the United Arab Emirates says: Thank you, CQ! I wake up early Tuesday morning to specially listen to you. In UAE - the latest melting pot of cultures - life is very stressful. Listening to you today it really reflects my life for seven years where my body gave in to high blood pressure, bitterness and negativism. Now God has changed me so - showing me what is important and helping me evict what is unimportant. Thank you for this wonderful program. God bless you. Selah.

Julie: Stress triggers the hormone cortisol, which is a major contributor to belly fat. Chronic exposure to cortisol can result in a complete shift in body shape. When you are under stress, your body cranks out cortisol, which springs fat from fat stores and dumps it into the bloodstream to give the liver and other organs energy for the "fight-or-flight" reaction. Any fat that is not used for energy gets redeposited in fat stores, primarily in the abdomen.

Working out reduces stress which in turn decreases cortisol. Working out also improves cortisol sensitivity, meaning you secrete less cortisol whenever you are anxious so your level of the hormone returns to normal more quickly. (Source: July/August 2016 Shape magazine)

When I look back on all these worries, I remember the story of the old man who said on his deathbed that he had had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which had never happened.

- Winston Churchill



We stress a lot over possibilities, wasting energy when we could be focusing it on the peace of God.

Rick’s “Epic Fail” story (continued): About two weeks after I started praying the prayer, “God, I will do anything,” I was in a serious car accident. I was stopped at an intersection and the person in front of me pulled out and the person coming down the road at about 50 miles an hour assumed I would follow the person in front of me and swerved into my lane to avoid me, but I did not move! My car got “t-boned” on my left hip. It spun my car around and I suffered severe nerve damage in my back. I went home so stiff I could hardly move. I was wearing my tape measure on my left hip where the other car hit me and had the shape of a tape measure imprinted into my thigh.



The next morning, being the person I am, I pulled myself out of bed and went to work. Why? Because I do not know how to stop. I was in such pain at work that I cried. But I won’t quit! I had to keep going! After a few days of this, my boss, who was not a compassionate man at this point in his life, said, “Rick, you are no good to me like this. Go home.” He did not say, “I am sorry you are hurt.”

I was home for six weeks without pay and was totally depressed. This was proof I was a failure! For two weeks I fought this darkness that was more and more overwhelming until one day I woke up and thought, “Wait a minute. I told God I would do anything to get out of the stress and He took me out! What am I doing?! This is my answer!” I began the slow, meticulous process of learning to look up and see the light instead of the darkness that surrounded me in that pit. I began to realize God actually delivered me. He needed to literally jar me out of where I was and what I was doing and force me to

STOP! SELAH!



Stop! Pause and consider! That was the beginning of the healing. I kept this picture of my car on my desk for many years after this incident, because whenever I saw that crashed car, I saw deliverance. It reminded me of God’s compassion and deliverance. To this day, when I feel stressed, I think of His deliverance which was much bigger than my trial. It took me being forcibly pulled out of my situation because I was so stubborn, but God had mercy on me.



Perhaps one of the easiest ways to allow stress to permeate our beings is through the simple choice to worry.

Jesus had plenty to say about that:

Matthew 6:25-34: (NASB) ²⁵For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?



Worry Point #1: Our lives are bigger than the basic necessities. Do we *live* this?

Jonathan's story: I have a stress right now going on in my life. My wife is unable to work because of medical conditions. She likely will not work permanently. Do we worry about what we eat or drink or how we pay the mortgage or the car payment? This can be an issue. Looking back to see the deliverance God has done in the past is faith strengthening to say, "He's got this!" It will work out and I have to have faith and confidence to do what I need to do and the Lord will provide. But there is stress.

This is a real experience for a lot of people, but that does not make it any easier. His deliverance may not come easily or quickly, but it still comes. Sometimes His deliverance comes through difficulty. Sometimes we have to crash or we have situations that do not go away that you have to grow through.

²⁶Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? ²⁷And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? ²⁸And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, ²⁹yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!

Worry Point #2: God's design provides for the plant and animal world. Surely we, as His children, can realize His providence applies to us as well!

³¹Do not worry then, saying, What will we eat? or What will we drink? or What will we wear for clothing? ³²For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Worry Point #3: As followers of Jesus, we certainly strive to have a clearly defined focus on the kingdom. Such focus is higher than the average population and will supply our needs without the added burden of worry.

³⁴So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Do the most important thing at any given moment. Focus on today and not on constantly asking, "What if?"

Worry Point #4: Do what you must do for God's glory today with focus and passion. Tomorrow's challenges will wait until tomorrow. God never gives us more than we are capable of.



2 Corinthians 4:8-10: (NASB) ⁸We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

To **WORRY** is to spend our mind's energy on a wasteful endeavor, because worry **NEVER** changes an outcome. To **FOCUS** is to invest our mind's energy into the shaping of our attitudes and actions, which **ALWAYS** changes and lifts the outcome to a praiseworthy level.



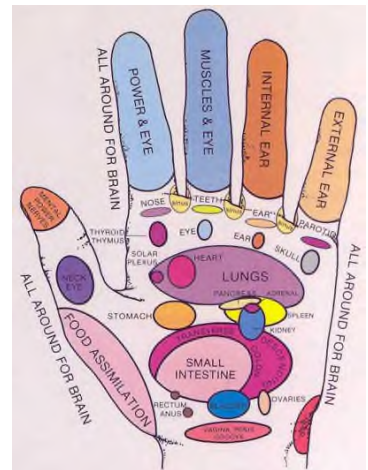
We can worry or we can focus - same kind of energy but with different results.

Julie: *Do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself.* I found it is really important to list out all you have to do. Seeing it all in one place makes the tasks more manageable and focused. Caution - do not let your lists have lists! I used to have Post-It notes everywhere, plus notes in my phone and notes on paper...now I use a white board to show all my things to do that day, and take great satisfaction in erasing them when done. Here is a secret: Sometimes I add little easy ones just to give me little victories!



Our bodies have certain pressure points that alleviate stress when massaged. One of the most powerful is the gastric point. It is two or three finger widths down from your bottom rib, in line with your belly button. It is quite sensitive. Using two fingers, gently massage it. The more you do it, the more stress you will relieve.

The middle of your palm corresponds to the solar plexus reflex point, the prime area for unwinding and relieving tension - so try this hand reflexology. Massage the inside of your right palm with your left thumb in circles. Repeat on the other hand. Now find the sensitive spot in the web between your thumb and index finger. Press deeply, hold for 10 seconds and release.



Isaiah 26:3-4: (NASB) ³The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You. ⁴Trust in the LORD forever, for in GOD the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock.

Final thoughts?

Julie: I implore our listeners to find balance in your life. Do not be afraid to ask for help. Share with others. Pray for others. Redeem the time. Use your moments of quiet profitably. Make a plan to change your schedule and your attitude. Pray.



We have an incredible opportunity to look stress in the eye and say, "Okay. It is here and lives in my circumstances but does not have to live in my heart or mind. What must I do to keep stress out?" The answer is to fill your heart with things that are profitable, spiritual and godly and rehearse them again and again. We can put stress where it belongs - away from us.

*So, why are we so stressed?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie!) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*



We ran out of time, but a CQ App user in Tennessee said: Thank you for sharing your experiences. Excellent topic to strengthen us as we do need encouragement. Don't just lean on God; hang on for dear life!

Remember that stress doesn't come from what's going on in your life. It comes from your thoughts about what's going on in your life. - Andrew J. Bernstein

Several admonishing statements that help us to keep our spiritual equilibrium intact:

1 Thessalonians 5:14-24: (NASB) ¹⁴We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. ¹⁵See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. ¹⁶Rejoice always; ¹⁷pray without ceasing; ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit; ²⁰do not despise prophetic utterances. ²¹But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil. ²³Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

Psalm 29:11: (NASB) The LORD will give strength to His people; The LORD will bless His people with peace.

For the Christian, stress is directly related to a lack of trust in God's ever-present providential care in our lives. Let us briefly review an example of how to apply the Old Testament brand of trust to our New Testament lives.

TRUST is the single concept that gives the following Psalm its transforming power:

Psalm 91:1-7: (KJV) ¹He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. ²I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. ³Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. ⁴He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. ⁵Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; ⁶Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. ⁷A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.



A failed attempt to gain Paul’s trust by those who were stressing out.

Acts 21:10-14: (NASB) ¹⁰As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, This is what the Holy Spirit says: In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. ¹²When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³Then Paul answered, What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁴And since he would not be **persuaded <3982>**, we fell silent, remarking, The will of the Lord be done!

The brethren in Ephesus worried/stressed over what was going to happen to Paul. The Apostle did not worry or stress, for he was content in God’s providence for him.

(Source: <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/stress-symptoms-causes-and-effects.htm>)

Stress Symptoms, Signs, and Causes: Recognizing the Harmful Effects of Stress and What You Can Do

Stress within your comfort zone can help you perform under pressure, motivate you to do your best, even keep you safe when danger looms. But when stress becomes overwhelming, it can damage your mood and relationships, and lead to a host of serious mental and physical health problems. The trouble is that modern life is so full of frustrations, deadlines, and demands that many of us don’t even realize how stressed we are. Whatever your job, by recognizing the symptoms and causes of stress, you can take the first steps to reducing its harmful effects and improving your quality of life.

What you can do

1. Distinguish between normal stress and stress that is overloading you
2. Learn to recognize chronic stress
3. Discover the factors that may influence your tolerance for stress
4. Learn about your body's time tested ways of controlling stress
5. Investigate lifestyle changes that reduce stress

What is stress?

Stress is your body’s way of responding to any kind of demand or threat. When you feel threatened, your nervous system responds by releasing a flood of stress hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol, which rouse the body for emergency action. Your heart pounds faster, muscles tighten, blood pressure rises, breath quickens, and your senses become sharper. These physical changes increase your strength and stamina, speed your reaction time, and enhance your focus. This is known as the “fight or flight” or mobilization stress response and is your body’s way of protecting you.



When stress is within your comfort zone, it can help you to stay focused, energetic, and alert. In emergency situations stress can save your life—giving you extra strength to defend yourself, for example, or spurring you to slam on the brakes to avoid an accident. Stress can also help you rise to meet challenges. Stress is what keeps you on your toes during a presentation at work, sharpens your concentration when you’re attempting the game-winning free throw, or drives you to study for an exam when you’d rather be watching TV. But beyond your comfort zone, stress stops being helpful and can start causing major damage to your mind and body.

The body's stress response

When you need (or *think* you need) to defend yourself or run away from danger, your body prepares for **mobilization**. The nervous system rouses for emergency action—preparing you to either fight or flee from the danger at hand.

If mobilization fails, the body freezes instead, a response known as **immobilization**. In extreme, life-threatening situations, you may even lose consciousness, enabling you to survive high levels of physical pain. This can leave you traumatized or unable to move on.



The effects of chronic stress

The body’s nervous system often does a poor job of distinguishing between daily stressors and life-threatening events. If you’re stressed over an argument with a friend, a traffic jam on your commute, or a mountain of bills, for example, your body can still react as if you’re facing a life-or-death situation.

When you repeatedly experience the mobilization or fight-or-flight stress response in your daily life, it can lead to serious health problems. Chronic stress disrupts nearly every system in your body. It can shut down your immune system, upset your digestive and reproductive systems, raise blood pressure, increase the risk of heart attack and stroke, speed up the aging process and leave you vulnerable to many mental and physical health problems.

Health problems caused or exacerbated by stress include:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Depression and anxiety | 6. Pain of any kind |
| 2. Weight problems | 7. Heart disease |
| 3. Auto immune diseases | 8. Digestive problems |
| 4. Skin conditions, such as eczema | 9. Sleep problems |
| 5. Reproductive issues | 10. Cognitive and memory problems |



Signs and symptoms of chronic stress or stress overload

The following table lists some of the common warning signs and symptoms of chronic stress. The more signs and symptoms you notice in yourself, the closer you may be to stress overload.

Cognitive symptoms	Emotional symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory problems • Inability to concentrate • Poor judgment • Seeing only the negative • Anxious or racing thoughts • Constant worrying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression or general unhappiness • Anxiety and agitation • Moodiness, irritability, or anger • Feeling overwhelmed • Loneliness and isolation • Other mental or emotional health problems
Physical symptoms	Behavioral symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aches and pains • Diarrhea • Nausea, dizziness • Chest pain, rapid heart rate • Loss of sex drive • Frequent colds or flu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eating more or less • Sleeping too much or too little • Withdrawing from others • Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities • Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax • Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

Causes of stress

The situations and pressures that cause stress are known as stressors. We usually think of stressors as being negative, such as an exhausting work schedule or a rocky relationship. However, anything that puts high demands on you can be stressful. This includes positive events such as getting married, buying a house, going to college, or receiving a promotion.

Of course, not all stress is caused by external factors. Stress can also be internal or self-generated, when you worry excessively about something that may or may not happen, or have irrational, pessimistic thoughts about life.



Common external causes of stress

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Major life changes | 4. Financial problems |
| 2. Work or school | 5. Being too busy |
| 3. Relationship difficulties | 6. Children and family |

Common internal causes of stress

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Chronic worry | 4. Negative self-talk |
| 2. Pessimism | 5. Unrealistic expectations/Perfectionism |
| 3. Rigid thinking, lack of flexibility | 6. All-or-nothing attitude |

Stress tolerance: How much stress is too much?

We're all different. Some people seem to be able to roll with life's punches, while others tend to crumble in the face of small obstacles or frustrations. Some people even thrive on the excitement of a high-stress lifestyle. For example, your morning commute may make you anxious and tense because you worry that traffic will make you late. Others, however, may find the trip relaxing because they allow more time and enjoy listening to music while they drive.

What's stressful for you?

Karen is terrified of getting up in front of people to perform or speak, while her best friend, Nina, lives for the spotlight.

Phil thrives under pressure and performs best when he has a tight deadline, while his co-worker, Matt, shuts down when work demands escalate.

Anita enjoys helping her elderly parents. Her sister, Constance, helps out as well but finds the demands of caretaking very stressful.

Factors that influence your stress tolerance

Your resiliency to stress depends on many factors, but there are steps you can take to improve your tolerance and handle more setbacks and challenges without becoming overwhelmed by stress.

Emotional awareness. Many of us are so used to being overloaded with stress that we don't even notice it anymore. Feeling stressed feels normal. But awareness of what you're feeling, physically and emotionally, can have a profound effect on both your stress tolerance and how you go about reducing stress. Having the emotional awareness to recognize when you're stressed and then being able to calm and soothe yourself can increase your tolerance to stress and help you bounce back from adversity.

The quality of your relationships and support network. Social engagement has always been a human being's most evolved response to life's stressors. So it's no surprise that people with a strong network of friends and family—with whom they're comfortable sharing emotions—are better able to tolerate stress. On the flip side, the more lonely and isolated you are, the less opportunity you have for social engagement and the greater your vulnerability to stress.



Physical activity. Regular exercise can lift your mood and serve as a distraction to your worries, allowing you to find some quiet time and break out of the cycle of negative thoughts that feed stress and anxiety.

Diet. The food you eat can improve or worsen your mood and affect your ability to cope with life's stressors. Eating a diet full of processed and convenience food, refined carbohydrates, and sugary snacks can worsen symptoms of stress while eating a diet rich in fresh fruit and vegetables, high-quality protein, and healthy fats, especially omega-3 fatty acids, can help you better cope with life's ups and downs.

Other factors that influence your stress tolerance

Your sense of control – It's easier to take stress in your stride if you have confidence in your ability to influence events and persevere through challenges. This is why hardship or persistent money worries can be major stressors for so many of us. If you feel like things are out of your control, you're likely to have less tolerance for stress.

Your attitude and outlook – Hopeful people are often more stress-hardy. They tend to embrace challenges, have a stronger sense of humor, and accept change as an inevitable part of life.

Your knowledge and preparation – The more you know about a stressful situation, including how long it will last and what to expect, the easier it is to cope. For example, if you go into surgery with a realistic picture of what to expect post-op, a painful recovery will be less stressful than if you were expecting to bounce back immediately.

Improving your ability to handle stress

Whether you're trying to build your tolerance to stress or cope with its symptoms, you have much more control over stress than you might think. Unfortunately, many of us try to deal with stress in ways that only compound the problem. We drink too much to unwind at the end of a stressful day, fill up on comfort food, zone out in front of the TV for hours, use pills to relax, or lash out at other people. However, there are many healthier and more effective ways to cope with stress and its symptoms.

Get moving

This is something you can do right now to help yourself start to feel better: exercise. Activities that require moving both your arms and your legs are particularly effective at managing stress. Rhythmic exercises such as walking, running, swimming, dancing, and aerobic classes are good choices, especially if you exercise mindfully (focusing your attention on the physical sensations you experience as you move). If you've been traumatized or experienced the immobilization stress response, mindfully exercising in this way can help you to become "unstuck" and move on.



Connect to others

The simple act of talking face to face with another human can trigger hormones that relieve stress when you're feeling uncomfortable, unsure, or unsafe. Even just a brief exchange of kind words or a friendly look from another human being can help calm and soothe your nervous system. Being helpful and friendly to others delivers stress-reducing pleasure as well as providing great opportunities to expand your social network.

Engage your senses

Another fast way to relieve stress is by engaging one or more of your senses—sight, sound, taste, smell, touch, or movement. The key is to find the sensory input that works for you. Does listening to an uplifting song make you feel calm? Or smelling ground coffee? Or maybe petting an animal works quickly to make you feel centered? Everyone responds to sensory input a little differently, so experiment to find what works best for you.

Set aside relaxation time

Relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation, and deep breathing activate the body's relaxation response, a state of restfulness that is the opposite of the fight or flight or mobilization stress response.

Eat a healthy diet

Eating a healthy diet isn't about eating bland food, adhering to strict dietary limitations, or depriving yourself of the foods you love. But by re-examining your existing diet and experimenting with new ways of eating that promote mental health, you can find an eating plan that not only helps to relieve stress, but also boosts your energy, improves your outlook, and stabilizes your mood.

Get your rest

Feeling tired can increase stress by causing you to think irrationally. At the same time, chronic stress can disrupt your sleep. Whether you're having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep at night, there are plenty of ways to improve your sleep so you feel less stressed and more productive and emotionally balanced.