

Are you Distressing or De-stressing?

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It is now post holiday. The rush for buying is over. The daily routine goes on. There is work, school, activities, clubs and band practice. Don't forget those church obligations we well. Stress is a normal part of our life. Is all stress bad? Can we turn our hectic lives into something more productive and fulfilling?

How we look at stress and our response to it determines our overall health is not new to any of us. There are countless articles on how stress affects our heart, blood pressure and its impact on obesity. Stress can make manifest in our bodies through back pain, neck pain and headaches. Watching television before bedtime can overtime decrease the production of melatonin which disrupts the normal sleep cycle. Lack of "good" sleep can cause a stressful event to mount to volcanic eruptions.

So, can these busy hectic times ever be beneficial to our health? This may seem odd but it is true in that our frantic pace can lead to a teachable moment for any of us. How many times have we overloaded our schedules so much that we have totally missed what someone was trying to tell us, because we are already thinking about the next activity on our to do list. Personally and shamefully so I can think of examples of when my children have said to me, "We already talked about that Mom." This reminds me to make a conscious choice to learn from crazy overloaded schedules that I can change habits to lead a less stressed more productive life.

I like to remember what I call the "Three L's in Life" One is to LEARN from your past stressful events. This may involve journaling on the positive and negative outcomes related to a stressful event. This reflection or looking back as I call it can make you LAUGH about an event. "Laughter, the second "L" produces positive emotions such as happiness, joy, love, faith, hope and willpower. Did you know that children laugh far more in a day than adults? How many times have you personally focused on what you think needs to be done and forget what should be done. Victor Borge once quoted "A smile is the shortest distance between two people." Take a moment to smile and laugh can helps us to lead more productive LIVES, by making us feel less stressed. How many times have you lived in the moment? The busyness, planning for the next event causes us to forget to enjoy what is happening now. Listen to Johnny's band recital, instead of texting a co-worker about a project. Jump in a pile of leaves with the kids. Frost the cookies with the kids even if it means sprinkles and frosting are all over the floor. All a child knows is the present moment. As a child matures the ability to enjoy the present moment becomes more elusive. Our mind becomes preoccupied with events whether past or future. So tell me now do you feel distressed or de-stressed? There is a quote from Mark Twain that reminds me of the importance of enjoying our present moment. "I have known a great many troubles in my life, most of which has never happened."