

Biblical Counseling Center publishes eCounselor's Weekly guide, to encourage counselors and all believers in discipleship and daily growth.

Stress Reduction in a Word!

By Sherry Allchin, M.A.

Learning to say "No" when asked to add another thing to our already stressed schedules will help reduce the stress level in the long run, though for "people-pleasers" it may increase the stress temporarily! It's hard to say "no" when you are expected to say "yes" and when you have a history of saying "yes." We have to ask ourselves **why** we are answering either "yes" or "no."

When our answer is based on Biblical principles and reasoning, it allows us to make a decision wisely and with confidence. That reduces stress. Over-commitment increases stress and reduces productivity. Since Scripture teaches us to let our "yes be yes" and our "no be no," we must carefully answer so that we can keep the commitments we do make and avoid making foolish or emotion-driven commitments.

Here are some questions to ask yourself before saying "yes."



1. Will this bring glory to God? - 1Co 10:31
2. Will this help me to be a more godly person and fulfill my God-given roles?
3. Will this help each one in my family rather than detract me from ministry to my family? (i.e., Can I involve my family in this activity alongside me to promote growth in each of them?)
4. Will others be drawn to God's Kingdom through my involvement and support of this activity?
5. Am I more concerned to please God by how I steward my time than with what others think of me, either positively or negatively?

If the answer to all the above is "Yes!" and your heart connects to what you are being asked to do, you may choose to say yes if it fits into the schedule. If the answer to ANY of the above is no, then really consider your real priorities and evaluate how much time you have to give away. Give no more - even to sports, play, or fun! Eliminate activities until it's manageable. Perhaps there is another activity that you could eliminate from your schedule to make room for this activity, but don't just add it to an already stressed out "To Do List."

Stress is a negative internal response to a thought or circumstance.

You alone control how you perceive that circumstance. If you think adding this activity will overwhelm you or cause problems for you, your stress level rises. If you think by refusing to add it, others will speak badly of you, stress rises. So your stress is the direct result of what you think / believe. But how does God factor into that circumstance? Will He empower you either to do the job or to say "No" to the job? Does His desire for you matter more to you than what another wants from you?

Only when you move away from how this will affect you and then look at it through the eyes of the Lord and Biblical principals can you make a wise and objective decision. It helps also to remember that difficulties are temporary but will produce maturity in you that will last forever. (Rom 8: 18) Soon enough you will move forward by faith and in confidence, leaving the stress behind!

Reducing stress is a matter of bringing balance and priorities to your schedule and lifestyle.

It's learning to say "No" rather than being pressured into commitments you know you should not be making at this time. They may be good activities, but are not right for you in this season of your life. It's learning to say "No" when your motivation for saying "Yes" is horizontal rather than vertical.

We all need to simplify our lives and reduce our stress levels as an act of worship to God! When we are too busy and overly stressed in just keeping up with expectations (ours and other's!), we burn out rather than experience the energy that comes from living with an eternal, vertical focus. When we live motivated only by His glory, He gives us Abundant Life! Our stress turns to energy in living for Him.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true....think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. Php 4: 6-9

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